

# Sketch

COMIC BOOK ART TIPS AND TECHNIQUES

#37  
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**TOM  
BIERBAUM**

Thinking Visually

**MITCH  
BYRD**

Groups of People

**JOE  
STATON**

Drawing Lanterns

**REBECCA  
THOMPSON**

My Coloring Process

**RON  
FORTIER**

From the Beginning

**GEORGE  
TROSLEY**

Cool Cars

**RYAN OTTLEY**

INVINCIBLE and more

**ARIE KAPLAN**

SPEED RACER



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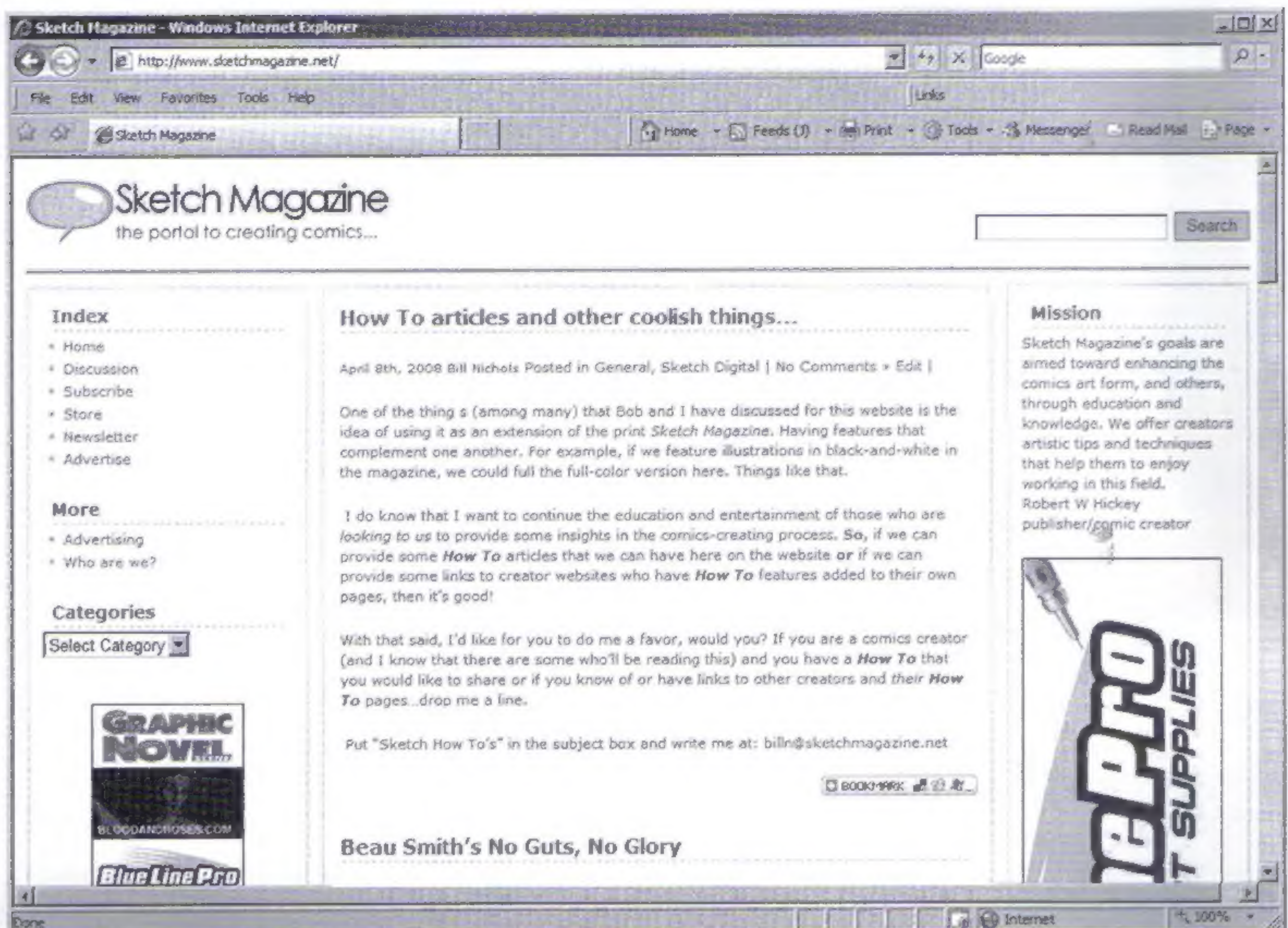
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# A note...

Crazy...

I need to write this so we can wrap up Issue 37. Let me detail why this simple note is a major task.

We are designing a new line of products for BL called **Blue Line Kids**. These are the first products designed by Ringtail Café and I've had to tweak and fix a few production problems as we print the first demos for testing. In the middle of designing these products we've had a major press run for Blue Line Art and I'm breaking in a new printer. And now I've decided to create a new company to handle publishing called **Unleashed Press** for which I needed business cards. I'm starting a convention and that meant I needed to design the logo. On top of *all that* I'm meeting with realtors to move our brick and mortar store **Comics 2 Games** to a new location by Halloween.

That, my friends, was *today*. No kidding.

## Now Sketch #37...

**Ryan Ottley** is one of my favorite artists. I've enjoyed watching him grow as an artist as he continues his run on *Invincible* and I'm a frequent viewer of his website <http://ryanottley.com/>


We welcome a few new creators like **Ron Fortier**, who I first listened to on a Comic Related Podcast by **Chuck Moore**. Since then I've been following a few of his threads on The Comic Related Forums. I'm looking forward to learning from Ron's vast amount of knowledge.

**Rebecca Thompson** is one of the best young artists that I have seen in a long time. Rebecca, or **Beckna** as we refer to her on the **Art Unleashed Forums**, is a talent that I hope to see a lot of work from in the near future.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention **Joe Staton**! I've really enjoyed reading his work over the years. We feel very privileged to have him here in Sketch and hope to read more about his techniques and experiences.

Now some dirty laundry...

I'm sure by now everyone has noticed that *Sketch* #36 had the number #34 on the cover. I can't blame it on the Skrulls or any kind of invasion. It was my fault. In the rush and craziness of wrapping up #36 I removed the wrong layer in Photoshop when I *flattened* the cover. We noticed it in the printer's proofs after we had signed off on them and they started printing. I've always said that Sketch is a work in progress. If we screw up we'll tell you so you don't make the same mistake.

  
Take care,

Robert W. Hickey

[bobh@bluelinepro.com](mailto:bobh@bluelinepro.com)

Follow my Twitter Blogs at: <http://www.twitter.com/roberthickey>





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Coloring in Photoshop by Rebecca Thompson





### Robert W. Hickey

Along with his duties as publisher of Sketch Magazine, he is the creative force behind Blood & Roses, StormQuest, Tempered Steele and Race Danger. He currently has a new Blood and Roses project in the works that will be appearing at SKYSTORMONLINE.COM. Bob is one of the co-founders of Blue Line Art and Afterburn Media LLC.



### Bill Nichols

As editor of *Sketch Magazine*, Bill welcomes the chance to educate and help other pros to pass along their hard-earned knowledge of All Things Comic Book. Bill has inked for Knight Press (*StormQuest*, *Blood and Roses*, *Dead Kid Adventures*), Caliber Press (*Raven Chronicles*, *LegendLore*, *Magus*) and others. As co-publisher of SkyStorm Studios, Bill is excited to be working on some old favorites and some new stories, as well as bringing life to his own Sparta Bay project.



### Tom Bierbaum

Tom, with wife Mary, has scripted such comics as Legion of Super-Heroes and The Heckler for DC Comics, Xena and Return to Jurassic Park for Topps Comics, Star for Image Comics and Dead Kid Adventures, a creator owned project by Knight Press.



### Mitch Byrd

Mitch's pencils wow everyone. While you enjoy his exclusive Sketch material issue after issue, look for his work on Guy Gardner: Warrior, Shi, Starship Troopers, and many other comics, as well as Blue Line Art's Notes to Draw From, Notes to Draw From 2 and Mitch Byrd's Scribbles and Sketchs. Mitch's latest projects include a Blood and Roses graphic novel and a creator owned project titled Kings of the Road.



### Bob Almond

A comics fan since the age of nine, Bob instantly set his career goal on breaking into the funny book biz and is probably most-known for his 3-year critically-acclaimed run with Priest & Sal Veiluto on Black Panther. His most recent assignment has been a return to his cosmic Marvel roots with the *Annihilation Conquest: Quasar* series. Bob lives in New Bedford, Massachusetts with his wife Diane, his son Nathan and cats Tux and BJ. You can visit his website The Bob Almond Inkwell at <http://www.almondink.com>



### Rebecca Thompson

Newly graduated from the University College for the Creative Arts in the UK, Rebecca has a life long passion for drawing and illustration. She is currently available for hire as a character designer and children's book illustrator, and spends the majority of her time creating new characters and stories. Rebecca has a BA (Hons) degree in illustration. To see more of her work, please visit <http://beckna.blogspot.com>

# Sketch

COMIC BOOK ART TIPS AND TECHNIQUES

ISSUE #37

VOL. 8 NUMBER 4

ISSN: 1536-7932

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Sketch Comic Book Art Tips & Techniques Magazine is published bi-monthly (six times a year) by Blue Line Productions, 166 Mt. Zion Road, Florence KY 41042, USA. Periodicals postage paid in Florence, KY and at additional mailing offices. Newsstand distribution by Warner International Periodical Services, Inc. Specialty Shop distribution by Diamond Comics Distributors and FM International. Basic subscription rates: one year (six issues) \$35.79 U.S., \$49.99 Canada & Mexico, \$99.00 Foreign. Prepaid in U.S. funds only. POSTMASTER: send changes of address to Sketch Magazine, 166 Mt. Zion Road, Florence, KY 41042. Entire contents copyright 2004 Blue Line Productions. All Rights Reserved. Reproduction in whole or part is prohibited. PRODUCED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



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Comic books are a **fun medium**! Blue Line Arts' goals are aimed toward enhancing this art form - and others - through knowledge and quality art supplies. We try hard to make certain that you, the reader, have the comic book technique information you require for your personal enjoyment of this great field.

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# Bills Words

You are a teacher.

You may not have certificate, the syllabus, and all that, but you have that opportunity to pass along information and help someone else. Your experiences are unique to you and they are the things that shape you and your destiny. Pass them along.

Remember when you needed someone to help you? Remember that you never really stop learning, even when you "make it". Ask other artists, the pros, and you'll find the same answer.

You can be an encourager.

Imagine someone who needs a lift or even just a good comment to help bolster them in the struggle to make it a step further in the industry, much less in their own lives. There is power in a word. Remember that.

You can be something more than you are.

Whatever your situation, whatever your level of skill or talent, you can keep going and be better. Work. Practice. Be a part of things. And that isn't just advice about your comics career. You can contribute to local groups and activities, charities, schools, churches; you can be a part of something that is greater than yourself. You pick.

- So do it.

- Teach others.

- Learn about yourself.

- Be better.

- Contribute.

- I encourage you.

And I will continue to work to be that for you.

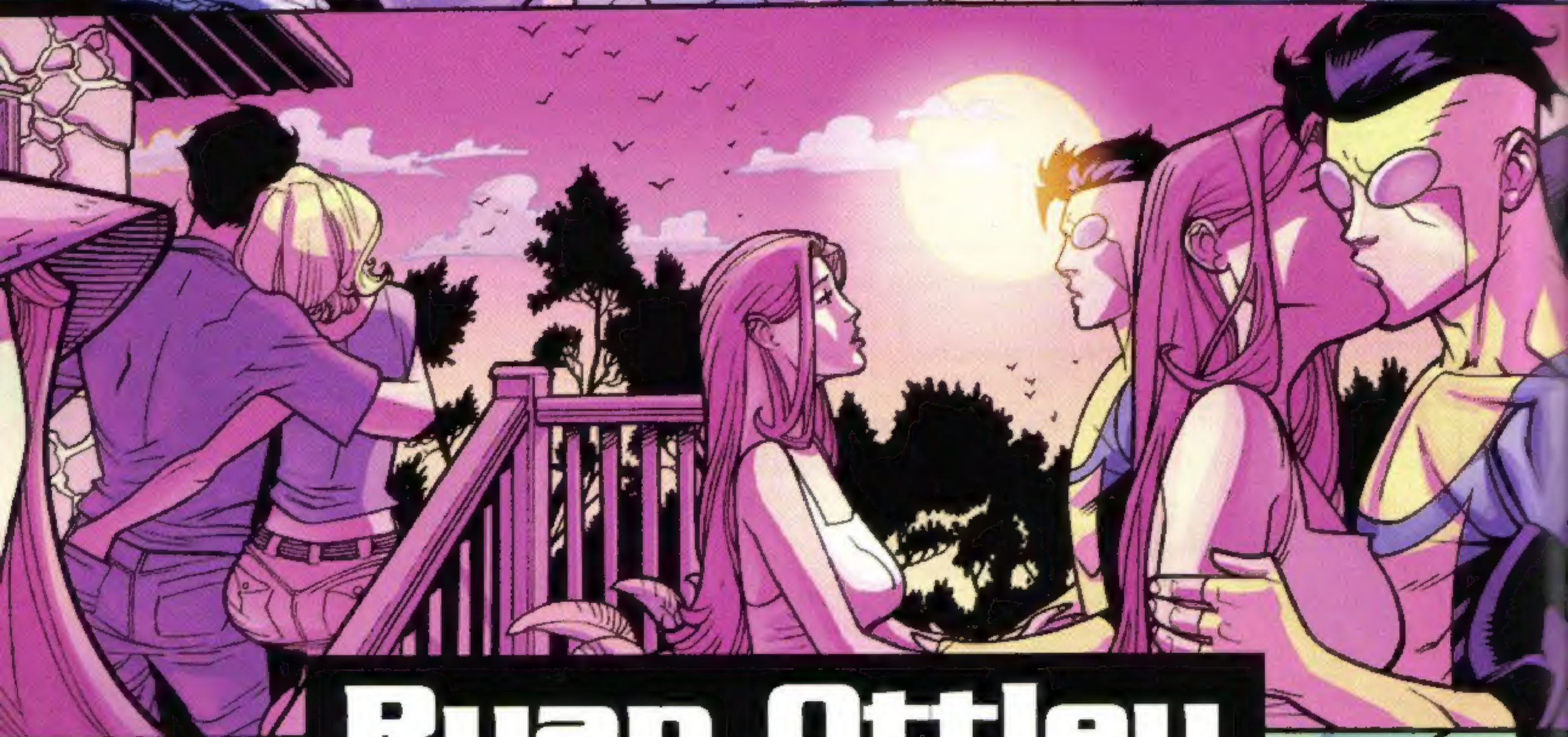
Best,

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# Ryan Ottley

Interview



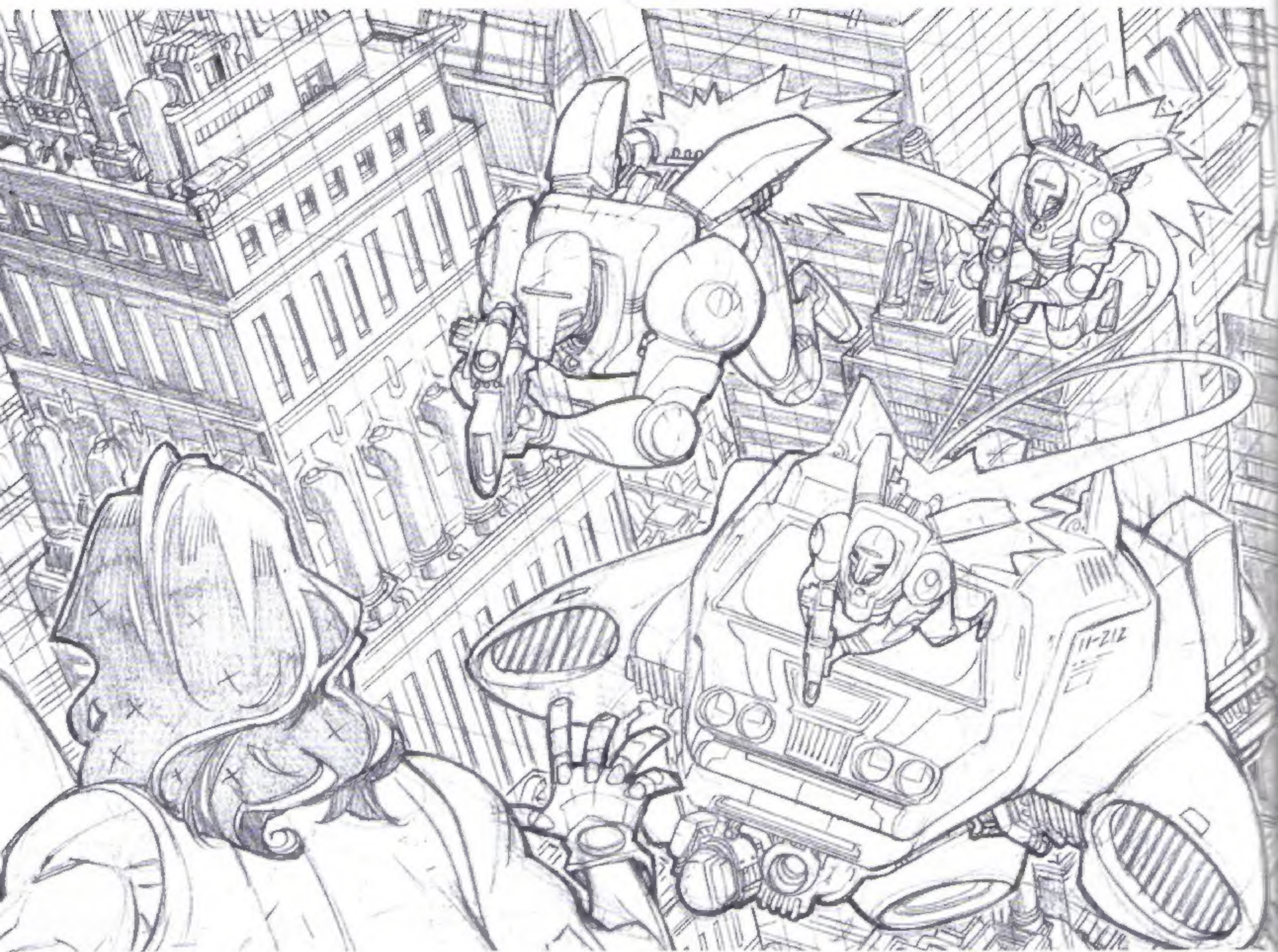




by Bill Nichols

**Invincible** is an independent super-hero title that has just passed the fifty issue mark, a rare feat in today's comics market. Writer/creator Robert Kirkman was lucky to find an artist that could bring his wild, anything-goes super-hero/sci-fi/slice-of-life ideas to life on the page. Ryan can draw it all, and still make it all look so easy and accessible to the reader. Nominated for the Russ Manning Best New Talent award a few years back, Ryan has settled in to being one of comics best talents, period!





**Sketch:** So, what projects are you working on right now, Ryan?

**Ryan:** Right now it's *Invincible* issue 51. I just finished issue 50 a little while ago and I'm really proud of that one. Also on top of doing *Invincible*, I'm doing a couple very small side things like original art cards for Marvel Masterpieces, *Brit* covers, and one *Noble Causes* cover. That's everything on my plate right now.

**Sketch:** What's coming up for you down the road? Anything of your own creation we might see on the horizon?

**Ryan:** Yeah, In May I have a one-shot coming out from Image called *Death Grub*. I wrote, penciled and inked this thing in 24 hours on 24-hour comic day last year. And I NEED to put together a sketch-book of some kind, but I really have no idea when that will happen.

**Sketch:** Do you like working on multiple projects at a time or would you prefer to concentrate on one thing at a time?

**Ryan:** I'm a one-track-mind kinda guy. *Invincible* keeps me super busy so if I do stuff on the side it's only the smallest of stuff like cards or covers. I have tried doing larger

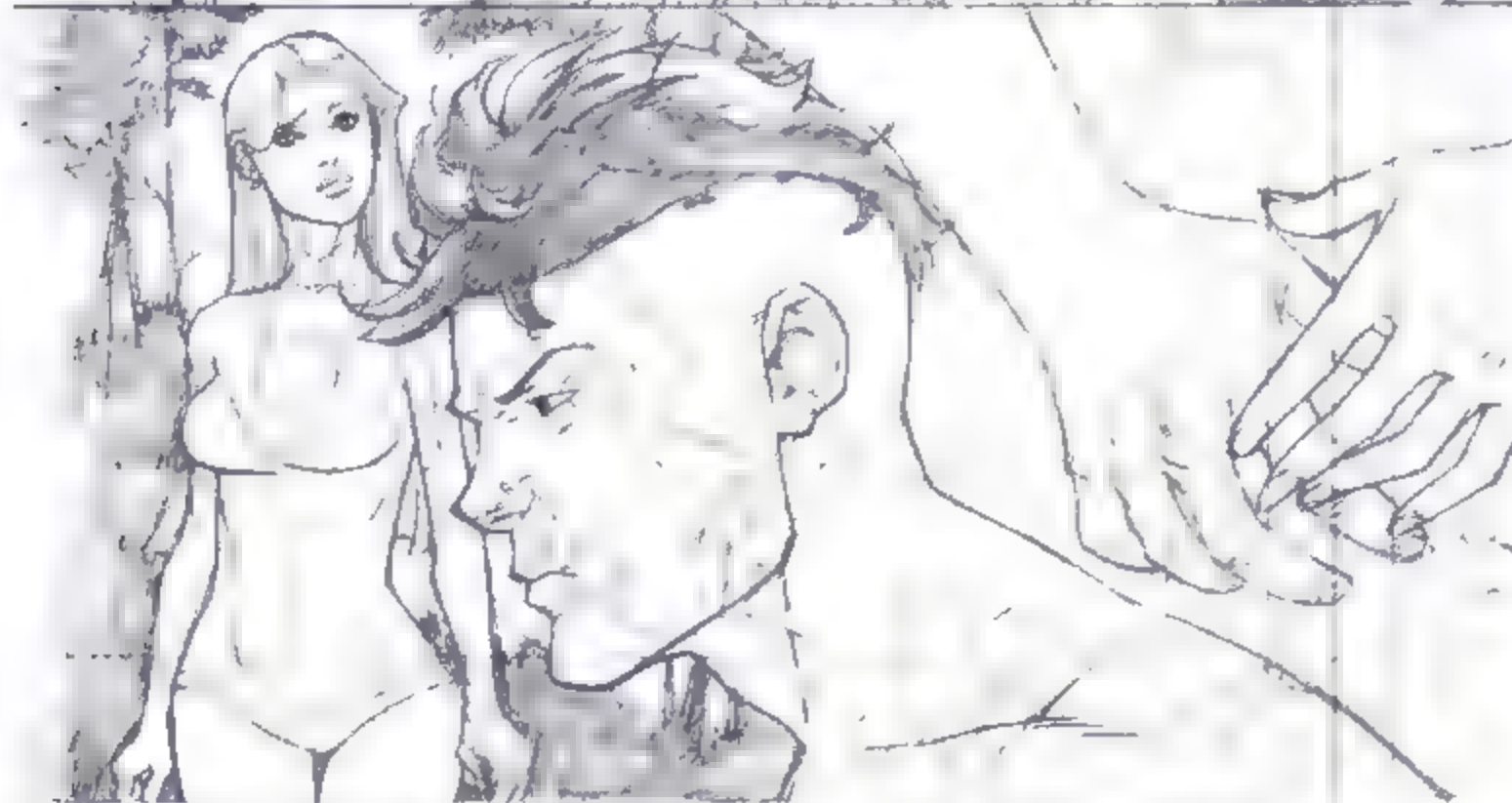
projects on the side but it just feels like too much work.

**Sketch:** It seems as though you do a lot of short stories, judging by the number of anthologies you're in. What is it you like about that format?

**Ryan:** Short stories seem like an art form unto themselves really. The writer has a big job to make something interesting with so few pages. That's something I started off drawing so I could get them published quickly in Digital Webbing Presents. It was easy to justify because it was a small project with a promise of getting published. So I was happy. I did do them for free



# ARTBOOKS



but I figured it was all good practice. I did some fun short stories with a bunch of different writers.

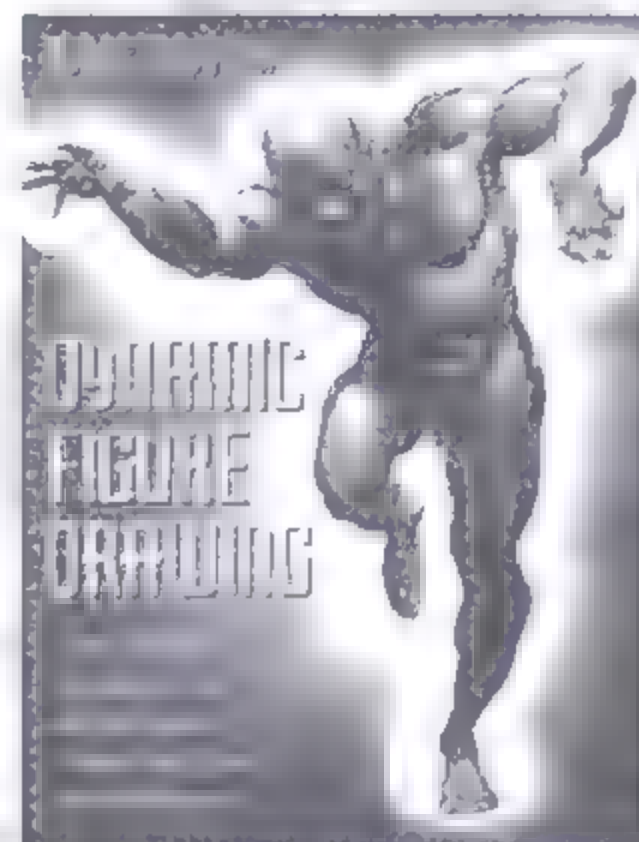
**Sketch:** Is there anything you wish that you were doing instead of being at the drawing table all the time?

**Ryan:** No, not at all. If there was something else I'd rather be doing,

I'd be pursuing that. I'm really very happy with where I'm at right now and I hope to be here for a long time.

**Sketch:** Do you ever feel "chained" to the table?

**Ryan:** Oh sure I feel that way sometimes. I worked at home for four years and even when I wasn't



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working it felt like I needed to be. But there are just way too many distractions at home, so now I have an office away from home. It works much nicer this way. I can get more work done and when I get home I can be there with my wife and son.

**Sketch:** Looking around your workspace, what kinds of things on your shelves or walls inspire you?

**Ryan:** Definitely. I collect original art that I put in a folder. I have art from favorites like **Art Adams**, **Stuart Immonen**, **Chris Bachalo**, **Jim Lee**, and more. I have plenty of books on my shelf, lots of European stuff which can be very inspiring. I get prints at cons from

favorite artists also and tack them up on a cork board. I try to stay inspired.

**Sketch:** What motivates you when you're working on things and creating comics?

**Ryan:** Music while I pencil and movies while I ink.

**Sketch:** What's your typical day like, Ryan? Or is there such a thing?

**Ryan:** Oh it's pretty regular, wake up, check e-mail, get script, work, go home.

**Sketch:** Do you prefer working with a full-script or a plot?

**Ryan:** I've never worked from a plot so I wouldn't know. Robert keeps the scripts pretty full for me. I assume it would take more time and thought to work from a plot, so the conclusion I get from that would be I'd rather have a full script.

**Sketch:** How do you approach doing a page? Or a whole story?

**Ryan:** I always read the script first when I'm printing it off, then again when I'm doing thumbnail sketches on it. I draw very quick sketches on the script to figure out what the page will look like. Then it's onto the Bristol board. I lay it out following the sketches, then pencil in rough details. I keep my pencils pretty loose when I ink



myself I scan the pencils for Robert to approve then I ink it. And sometimes when I ink I have to pencil in more, like I didn't give myself enough information for a background area so I need to tighten it up a bit. Then when it's all inked up I erase the pencils and scan and send it off to the colorist.

**Sketch:** What do you think about art school and formal training? Is it something you recommend?

**Ryan:** I have a hard time recommending school since I never did the college thing, and many people in this industry skip that also. I used to really want to go to the Joe Kubert school but it came down to what I could afford. It was cheaper for me to live at home and lock myself in my room and look at anatomy books and draw all day. You don't NEED a degree to draw comics, you need to draw well to draw comics. And you don't NEED school to get better but I can imagine it could only help. The most important thing is to motivate yourself always to get better. If you go to school or not, never stop learning.

**Sketch:** I know that you have influences in the course of your own growth.

Who or what were they?

**Ryan:** I don't remember who my influences were before comics but my first influence in comics was **Todd McFarlane**. I would copy his art and hang it on my wall. Later I'd be more influenced by **Arthur Adams**, **Moebius**, **Dale Keown**, **Geoff Darrow**, and **Joe Madureira**. And then from anatomy books from **George Bridgman**.

**Sketch:** Any out there whose work you follow? Do you still have mentors?

**Ryan:** I'll still buy anything and everything from all of those influences I stated above. I also follow many artists like **Ed McGuinness**, **Stuart Immonen**, **Frank Quitely**, **Cory Walker**, **Cliff Rathburn**, **Eric Canete**, and many many more. Lots of great talent out there.

**Sketch:** Are there writers other than **Robert Kirkman** that you'd like to work with?

**Ryan:** **Warren Ellis** and **Grant Morrison** are obvious names to mention. Along with **Ed Brubaker**, **Brian K Vaughn**, and **Stephen King** would be cool.

**Sketch:** What about inkers? Is there anyone whose inks you might like to see on your work?

**Ryan:** Yes. **Cliff Rathburn** is the only guy I've found to ink my work perfectly. But I'd love to work with **Tim Townsend** and **Dexter Vines**.

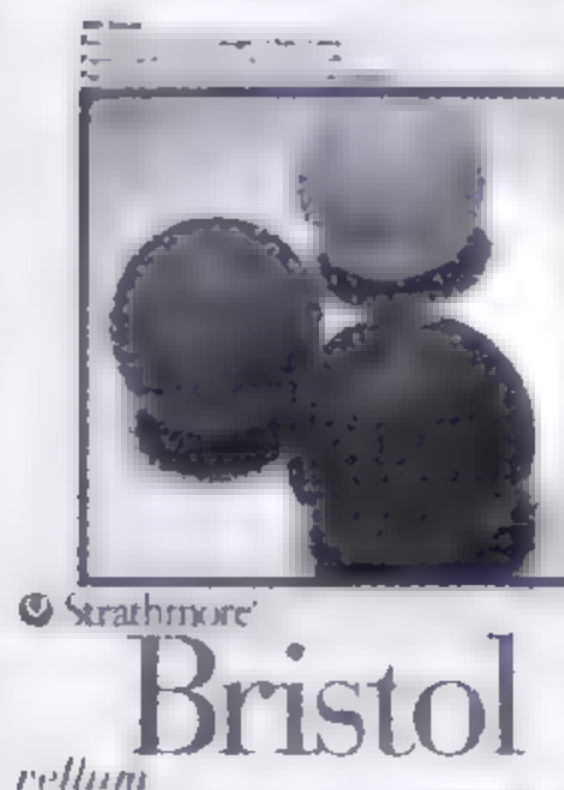
**Sketch:** What are some of the tools you use? Any brands you prefer?

**Ryan:** I prefer **Staedtler** brush pens and their regular pens also, along with **Pitt** pens

**Sketch:** How do you feel about being an influence or a mentor to those trying to make it?

**Ryan:** It feels weird. I feel like I'm not where I want to be with my style. I'm always learning and trying to get better with every issue. I feel like my influences are set in their knowledge like they can draw whatever they want in their

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style. I feel like I'm not there yet. So it's odd to see people saying I'm one of their influences. I'm flattered, but surprised also.

**Sketch:** What advice would you give those artists coming up?

**Ryan:** Go to college! heh. No, do whatever you feel you need to do to learn. Practice like crazy, fill up them sketchbooks. I use to have a few different sketchbooks going at the same time. One for anatomy, one for faces, and one for anything like monsters or whatever weird ideas I'd have. Sometimes learning

anatomy can be very frustrating but do whatever you can to make it enjoyable or you'll hate it. The anatomy is most amazing thing to learn to draw, it's tuff but it's really the most important thing to get down. I'm still learning every day and I love it!



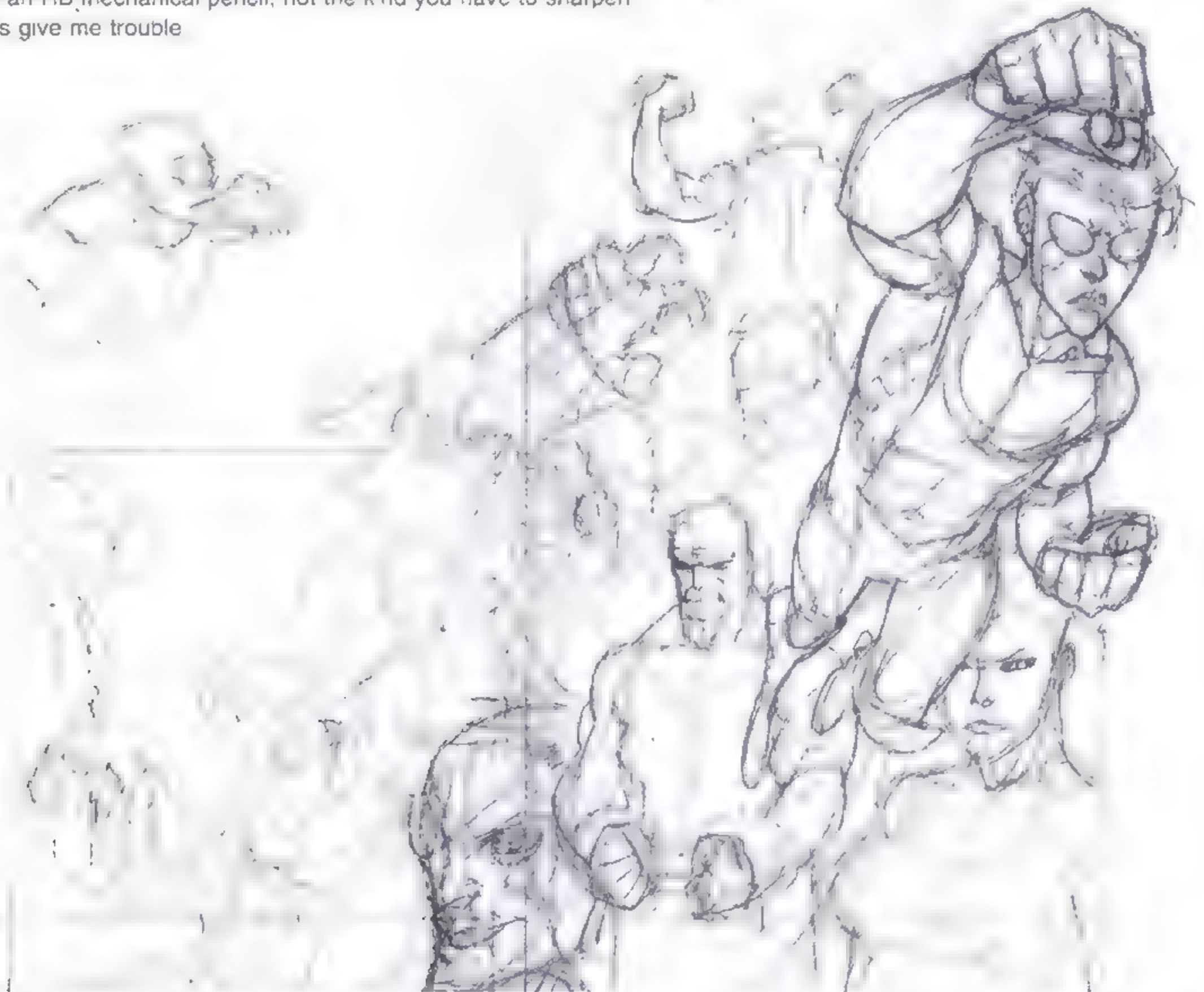
# INVINCIBLE HARDCOVER #4

by Ryan Ottley

I started this cover off with trying to figure a decent pose for Invincible. For me a flying character is one of the hardest things to draw. Trying to create new flying poses is nearly impossible. You can only just imagine a pose and do it in your style and hope it comes off as different than everyone else's flying poses. I recommend NOT looking at anyone else's, just learn anatomy and do your own take on it.

After I got down the pose I wanted I sketched in the background characters.

I have Heroes on top and Villains on the bottom. The Villains overlap a little behind Invincible with the Squids going up in a swirl. I was just trying to change up the composition a little bit from the last three. For layouts I use an HB mechanical pencil, not the kind you have to sharpen. Those always give me trouble.





And for finished pencils I use a 2B mechanical.

You can see I kept things pretty sketchy even while I inked

Sometimes I get bored and I don't want to finish pencilling everything before I ink. Like in this case I finished pencils on a few characters and just jumped right into inking. I always ink foreground characters first and work my way back. If it needs more pencilling before ink I do it. Or sometimes I ink right over the sketch. It just depends on how much info is already there in the sketch. I inked this cover with a Steadtler Mars 3000 brush pen. Be careful if you get these, they smear on Bristol board very easily. Recently I've started using a brush again but occasionally I'll go back and use the brush pen. But of course now I am getting a lot of help from Cliff Rathburn inking so I ink much less these days. Also I use regular Staedtler pens, mainly an 01 and an 03. And Pitt pens. When I'm done inking I'll erase all the excess pencils, sign it high-five it, then scan it and send it off to the colorist. Done!

Ryan

<http://ryanottley.com/>







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There are lots of challenges to thinking visually as you script a comic — figuring out how to give splash pages enough content to be truly interesting. Look at how much bonus information is included in this splash page beyond the big featured “cliff-hanger” information of Morty Coyle emerging from his grave — the two little bonus panels, the novel, reprinted graveyard in the background and the text issue blurb and the credits. Try to make your splash pages worth a full page of space.

## The Universe at Your Finger Tips Thoughts on Scripting Comic Books THINKING VISUALLY

by Tom Bierbaum

If you want to write comic books, you have to learn to think visually.

No matter how good a writer you are, the vast majority of the information readers will take from your story will come from the artwork. And with most readers, the story won't ultimately succeed for them unless they like the artwork.

This may not seem fair, but if you don't particularly care about working with visual elements, you probably should be writing novels or working in radio, not comic books.

So here are a few tips that may help you to think visually as you write your scripts and plots.



**1.) Lean on Your Artist.**

Most comic-book artists, even some relative neophytes, have a lot of innate understanding about how comics work visually because that's their area of interest. And successful, established pro artists can be absolute geniuses at these things and understand instinctively subtleties that might take you decades to figure out on your own.

So try to tap into that expertise as much as you can and give the artists as many chances as possible to apply their skills to your stories. Don't be lazy and require them to turn your poorly thought-out ideas into good comic-books stories. But be open to situations where they can choose to apply their abilities and elevate your stories.

Probably the best comics we've ever written were the ones during our Legion run when we'd come up with a pretty good basic plot and Keith Giffen would lay it out for us. Keith had spent years figuring out how to handle the visuals of this medium and that, coupled with his instinctive genius for storytelling, allowed him to turn our decent little story ideas into something special.

**2.) Know Your Artist's Strengths and Weaknesses.**

The artists are the visual experts but they all have things they can do well and things they can't do so well.

Some artists have trouble drawing action, some can't pull off credible everyday mundane scenes, some can't deliver that "epic" feel you might be looking for, some don't effectively communicate emotion, and so on. Some artists do spectacular "pin-up" art and others can make much better use of that space for more traditional storytelling. Some artists' worlds are always grungy and dark while other artists just naturally draw clean, gleaming worlds. Some artists just have trouble drawing machines or animals or children or something else.

Think about these things. Take a few seconds to imagine what your ideas might look like illustrated by the artist you're working with. As you decide how to tell your story, try as much as you can to play to the artist's strengths and not to his or her weaknesses. For example, you can try to show the things they draw well and tell in narration some of the things they don't draw so well.

**3.) Give Your Artist Latitude.**

Help the artist feel comfortable doing some tweaking and experimenting if he really feels he can tell the story more effectively by making a few changes. Protect your turf - don't let the artist start re-plotting your story and changing the events or themes - but keep things flexible enough that you're taking advantage of the expertise you have at your disposal.

Do this intelligently: making sure the artist you're working with has the skills and collaborative spirit to do this right. Don't be paranoid, but be aware there are artists out there who'd be happy to usurp your role and ease you out of a job.

**4.) Give Your Artist Options.**

A good way to create this atmosphere of flexibility is to sometimes come up with more than one way to handle a scene and tell the artist they can choose which one works best for them. Or to even give them free reign on a scene and then say if there's nothing the artist especially wants to do with this

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scene, here's one version he can fall back on. We sometimes did this in fight scenes where we didn't mind letting the artist choreograph the battle if he was so inclined (I personally find fight scenes kind of boring as a reader), but we were also conscious of not making the artist do our work for us if he didn't want to, so we gave him a perfectly acceptable set of instructions he could use. Usually they went ahead and used our fallback instructions, but I still felt more comfortable having given them the latitude to come up with something that might have worked out better.

There's one big problem with our habit of giving the artists more than one choice - it takes a lot of words to communicate multiple versions of a scene, and some of our plots could go on forever and be very hard to slog through. That's tough enough for the artist, but murder on the editors who have to go through the plots, usually on an impossible deadline and while suffering from varying degrees of sleep deprivation. So as much as you can, try to keep these things concise.

### 5.) Keep It Simple.

It's a lot easier for your artist to make your story appealing if he's got the room to showcase the visual elements of your story. Keep the visual needs of the story streamlined enough that things don't get too crowded and the stuff the reader is supposed to see will still stand out. The artist can always add background material to fill out the panels but if there are too many required elements you're going to be stuck with a crowded comic.

By the same token, make sure there's enough content to your story to fill the space you're working with. Don't make it the artist's job to fill big, over-sized panels where very little is going on. Really work to hit that happy medium between cramming in too much and sticking your artist with a big air-filled story.

### 6.) Understand What's Physically Possible and What Isn't.

Think through the actions you're plotting and try to avoid the kind of physical impossibilities that comics used to get away with. Superman can't put his hands down on a planet and push it to a different orbit - he'd sink into the planet long before he'd push it anywhere. And the Hulk can't pick up a building and carry it around - the building would fall apart if you tried to pull it out of the ground or walk around with it on your shoulder.

Those are pretty easy, obvious examples, but as you choreograph your stories, beware of all the ways you can be asking your artist to draw things that just aren't possible.

But worse than showing your character do things that aren't actually possible (comics are all about fantasy, after all) is asking your artist to draw something that really can't be drawn - a hero punching one villain in one

direction while simultaneously throwing another villain in another direction, or having your character staring at some background scene but requiring the artist to show the character's face, or showing the hero wearing tight form-fitting clothes over a super-hero suit that's got capes, collars, cuffs and oversized buckles.

We once instructed an artist to depict a speedy little vehicle that could also produce a drill that could burrow into the ground and provide the vehicle with an instant escape route. The artist very diplomatically observed that no speedy little vehicle could be carrying around a drill capable of that kind of burrowing, and even if it could, it would take so long to drill through the ground that it would be the slowest getaway in the history of comics. To his credit, this artist figured out an alternate way to handle the scene before pointing out the impossibility of our version, so work on the issue was able to continue with no delay and only a minimal bruising of the writer's ego.

### 7.) Remember It's Generally One Action Per Panel.

A typical rookie mistake is to call for two or three actions out of your character in a single panel. "The detective stands up, walks across the room and pours himself a cup of coffee." For the most part, each character can only do one thing per panel. There are a few tricks that sometimes allow you to kind of imply a second action here and there (one panel the hero is driving the car and the next he's jumping out of the now-parked car firing his gun at the villain, so the action of bringing the car to a stop is implied, not shown), but these can feel hokey and "comic-booky" when pushed too far.

If you don't mind a lot of potentially intrusive captions, you can describe what happened between panels in the caption and cover a lot of action that way. This technique used to be very common but has fallen out of favor in recent decades as stories have spread out and increased their emphasis on the visuals.

### 8.) Make Splash Pages Count.

Splash pages are tricky because there really aren't that many sights that genuinely justify a whole page in a medium where space is so valuable. Simply giving the artist a full page to depict somebody getting punched, or to show an explosion or to reveal the face behind the mask can result in a really boring page and a true waste of space.

Think about details that can be included in the splash page that will make the content worth the space. For example, you can flex your muscles a little as a writer on those pages with a few extra words that are truly special and worth the space. Or you can ask for some background characters or suggest interesting facets to the background. Splash pages don't need to be crowded but



they should generally have enough content that they're worth more than a few seconds of a reader's time.

### 9.) Think About Light.

Remember that the only reason humans can see anything is that we're equipped to sense light reflecting off the world around us. And there are all kinds of ways light can bounce off those objects to make your fictitious world look different and interesting.

So don't be afraid to steer your artist toward interesting effects with light sources. A light source very directly above the character gives the feeling of high noon or an artificial indoor light, such as an intense light in an interrogation room. Lighting the characters from below tends to make them look sinister, and it can also suggest they're staring down at some interesting sight. Harsh shadows imply bright sunlight or bright artificial light, while soft shadows suggest overcast weather or muted indoor lighting. Explosions and fires generate their own light and cast their own shadows. The dashboards of your vehicles create a glow that can light up your characters' faces.

Think about shadows and the black shapes that your panels will be filled with. Don't tie your artist's hands, but come up with ideas and suggestions that will make sure he or she is thinking about these things too.

### 10.) Think About Color.

Assuming you're not working on a black and-white comic, think about the impact of bright colors and muted colors, primary colors and earth tones, etc. Remember that in this case, such things have to be communicated to the colorist, and usually that will require coordination with the editor.

As a reader, I think a lot of comics these days are darker than they ought to be, making them hard to see and visually a lot less stimulating than they could be.

As in all other visual aspects of a comic, variety can make a big difference. Dark scenes with extremely muted use of color can have a lot of impact, but a steady diet of nothing but that can become boring in a hurry.

### 11.) Think About Angle.

Probably my all-time favorite artist was Curt Swan, the guy who did many of the great Superman and "Superman family" stories, especially from the 1950s through the 1970s. And in trying to figure out why his stories appealed to me so much, I began to notice how frequently he presented a point of view looking at the characters from above or below. It made every panel interesting and truly gave the world he was depicting an added dimension.

When the reader is looking down on the characters it can

tend to diminish the characters somewhat, either in physical stature or perceived morality, while a panel that has the reader looking up at the characters tends to add stature. But there are many other implications and moods you can elicit by altering the point of view, so don't be afraid to suggest some creative angles to your artist.

### 12.) Think About Distance From the "Camera."

It makes a huge difference whether you show your characters from a great distance, a medium distance or a close-up. Generally, the closer you get, the more emotional intensity the scene is going to have, and the further away you go, the more detachment the story's going to have.

Think about this and have the artist bring the "camera" in close when you want to have impact and move the camera out at other times. And call for variety to avoid a visual rut.

In all of these cases - when dealing with light, color, angle and distance - stay flexible and listen to your artist. Think more about giving him good ideas and making sure he's thinking about these things than about rigidly dictating instructions to someone who's the true expert.

### 13.) Remember That Comics Are Visual Not "Audial."

Things like explosions actually rely a lot on sound to impress us and comics are a silent medium. Realize the limitations of noisy things and sounds in general in this medium and script accordingly. Sound effects can pick up the slack a little bit but readers are getting less and less accepting of the old "Biffs" and "Pows," so realize there's a real limit to what you can do with sound effects on today's market.

### 14.) Develop a Sense of What's Interesting and What's Not.

Ultimately, you just have to get good at figuring out which visuals interest people and which visuals don't. This is pretty subjective, but a few hints - interesting things include sexy people acting in sexy ways, ugly or unusual-looking people, expressions of strong emotion, actions or objects that cause pleasure or pain, very familiar images used in their usual context or with some ironic twist, repetition (in small doses), a break in a pattern, scenes that hide vital details (people can't resist mystery) and panel composition that directs the reader's eye to the key element of the panel.

In general, just give it some thought and try to conceive of the kind of panels that grab your interest when you're reading a comic. Give your readers the kind of visuals you yourself like to see and you'll probably be mastering the skill of thinking visually as you script your stories.





Notes to Draw From

# ***The Crowd Roars***

by Mitch Byrd

A crowd

In this particular instance, we mean a "group of people, as in more than one". Or is it more than *three*? Whatever Webster's says. When a writer is asking that you draw a crowd that generally means a lot of people. Simple.

But what *isn't* so simple is making a crowd believable. The more people you show, the tougher it is bringing out individual characteristics in the folks that make up the crowd before you run out of characteristics for them all.

People aren't the same; they look and act differently. The bigger the crowd, the more character traits you have to juggle.





1 Here are some characters in a crowd. If I draw one with distinctive characteristics, then I've got to make them all distinctive.

Judging by their scarves and generally despondent expressions, I'd say that this particular group of bleacher teachers is ready to let a soccer coach know what they think of his or her game strategy. I don't think any of the characters has anything to say to the coach, but I like to think if they say something unkind that these characters will say it in their own personal way.



2 Don't just have your characters stand out because they are wearing different costumes. Have them stand out because of how they wear their costumes. Body language and action of each member of your group contributes as much to the story as dialogue. The writer needs your help building the characters. Here are some super-heroes off the clock.





All work and no play make Firefly, Lighting Man, and Bruiser Boy dull boys and girl.

3. The three characters are all doing the same thing, but doing that same thing in their own unique ways. They look off-panel, but *how* they look gives insight to each.

The girl leans forward and thus is more friendly and outgoing.

The guy with the flashlight leans backward, so he's willing to participate but seems a little reluctant, as if he'd rather be somewhere else.

And the big guy in back looks as if he's just arrived and not yet up to speed with the other two. You can tell a lot of



4. And sometimes you can crowd panels into one, kind of like a montage. With our inclination to read left to right, you can tell even more story in one panel, but in this situation, characters and actions must absolutely be distinctive.

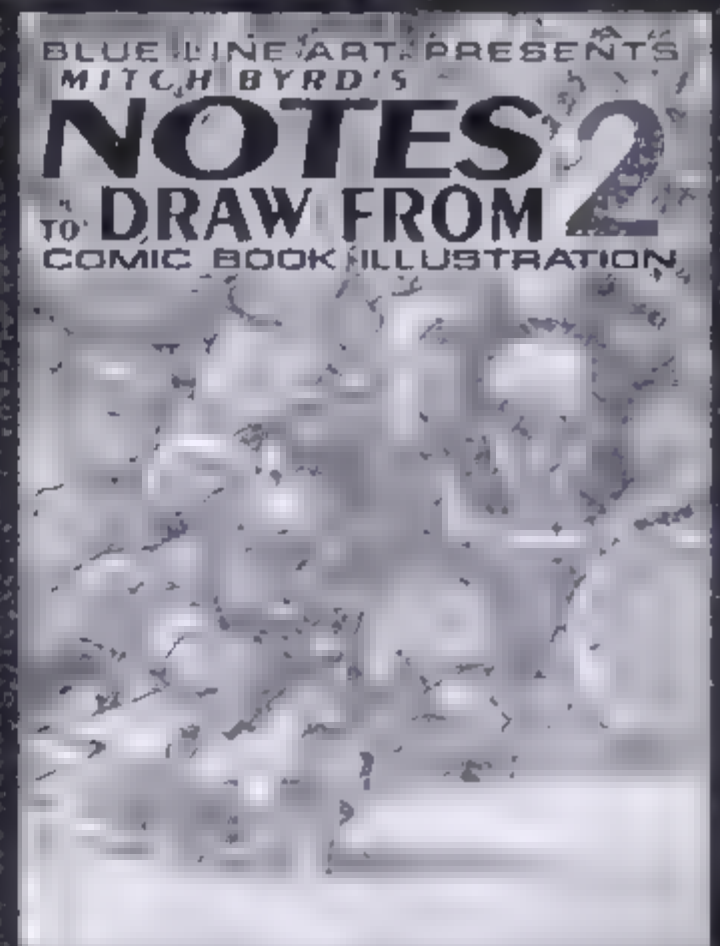
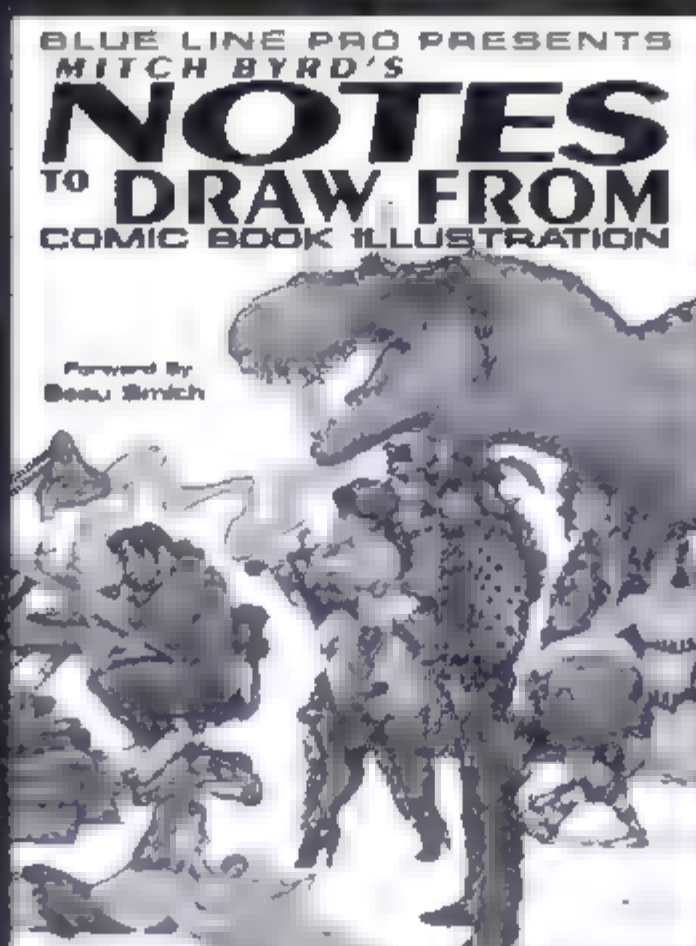




5 But that's just one way to punch up a story. Keep the characters lively and the panel can be a knockout.

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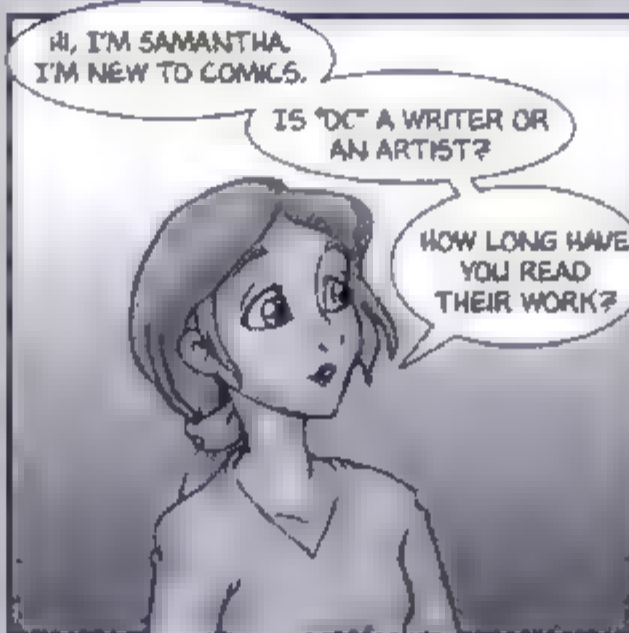
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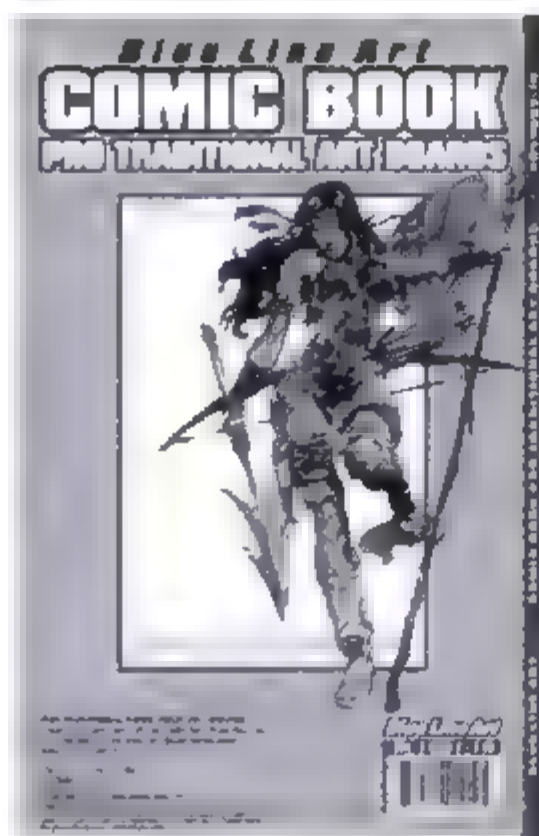


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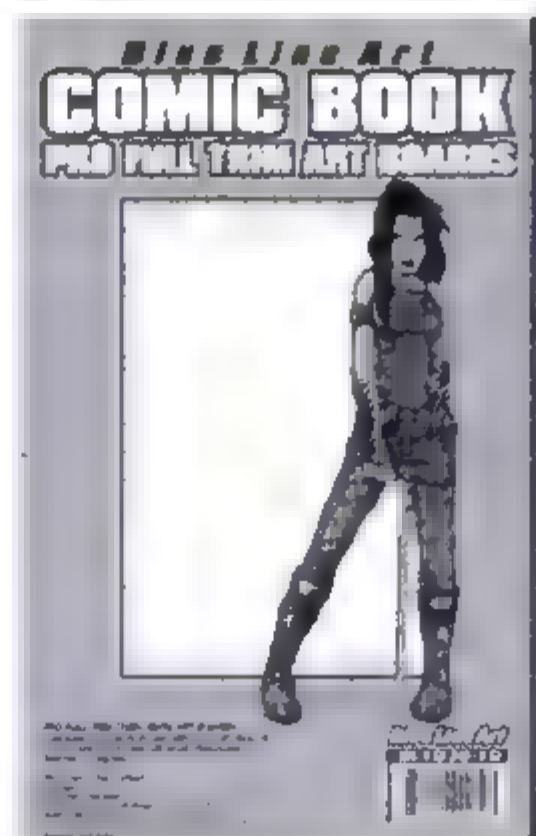
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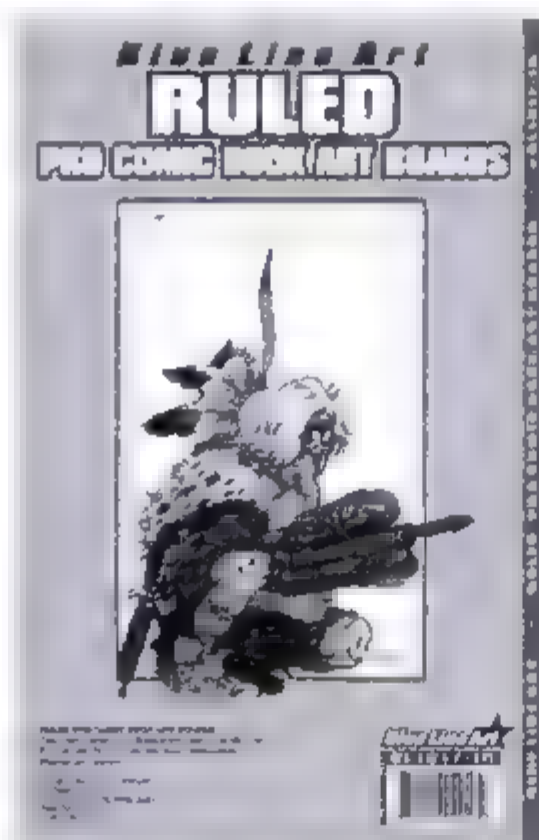
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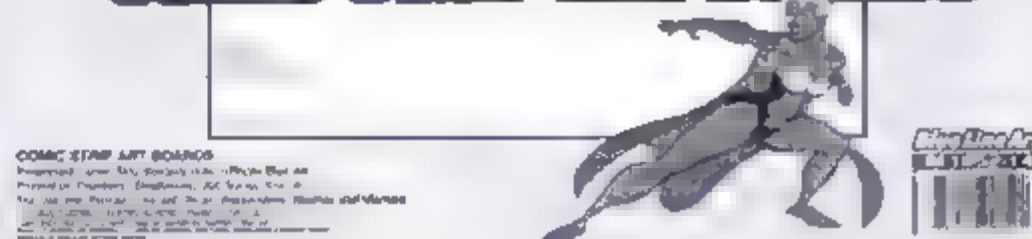
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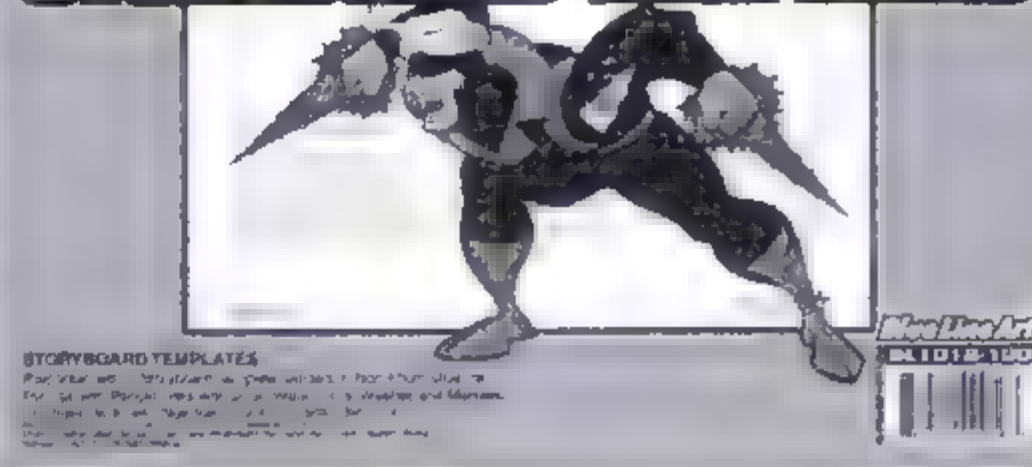
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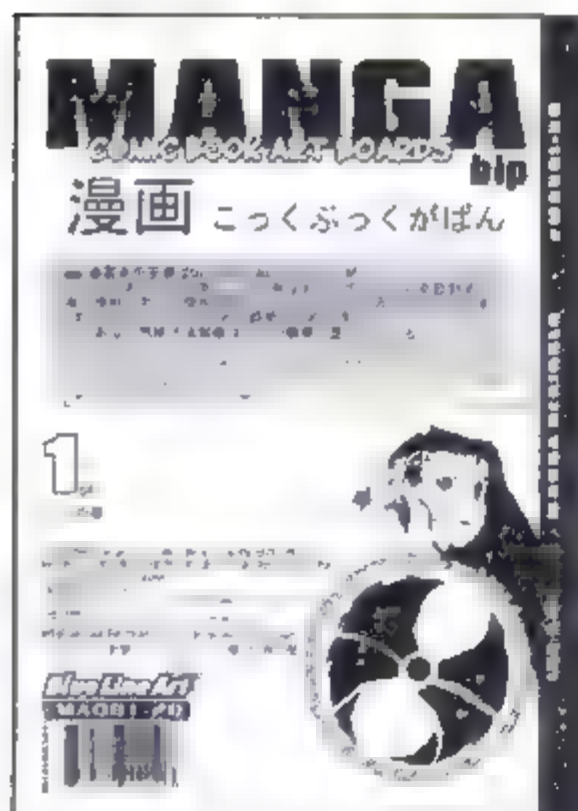
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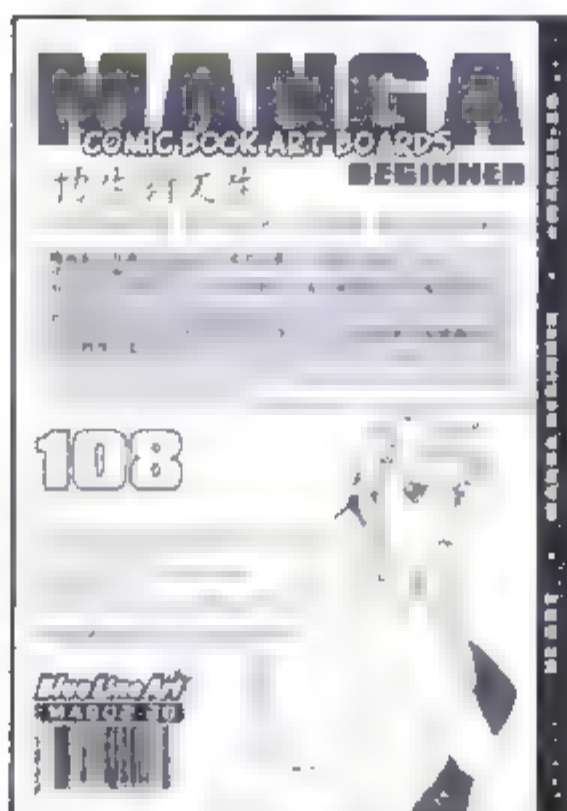


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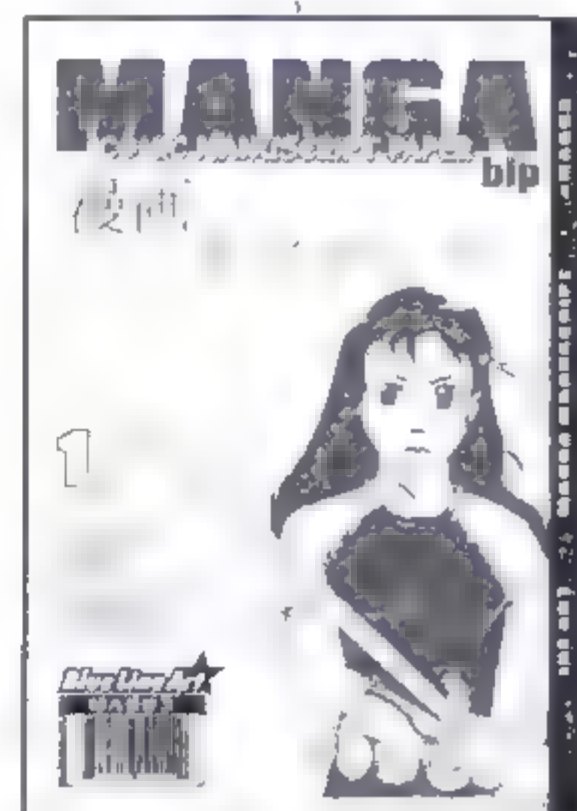


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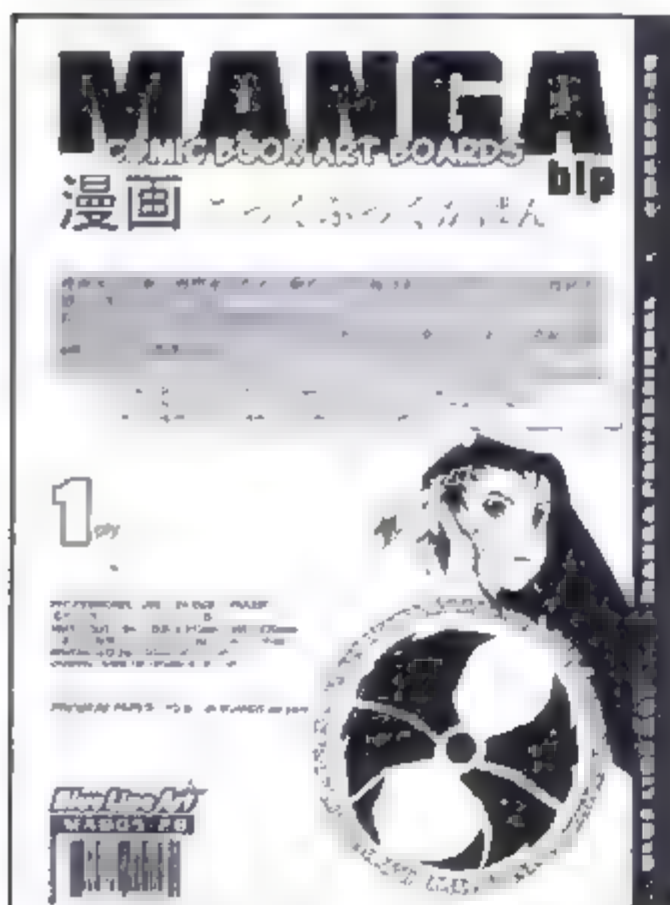


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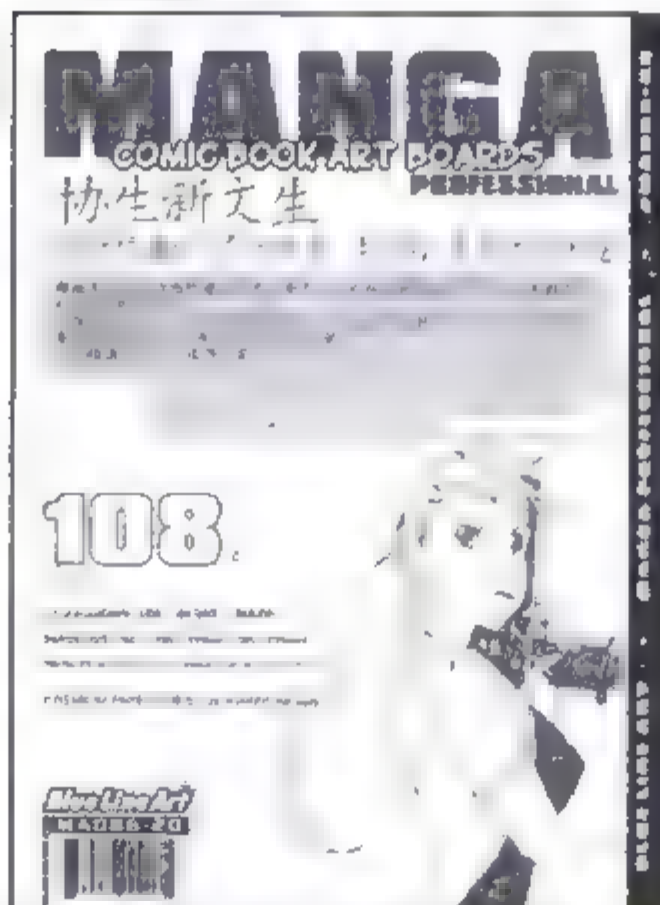


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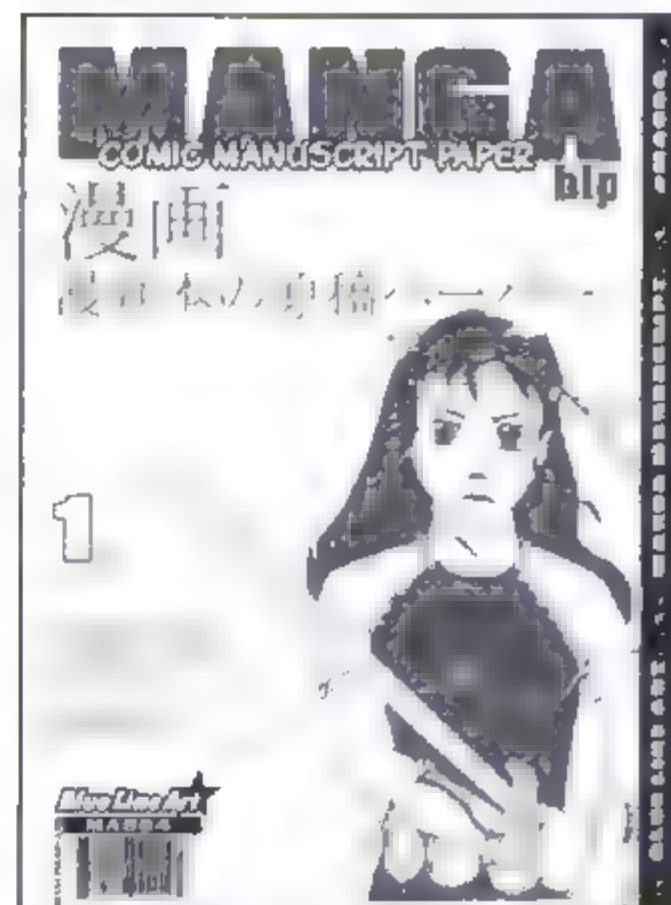


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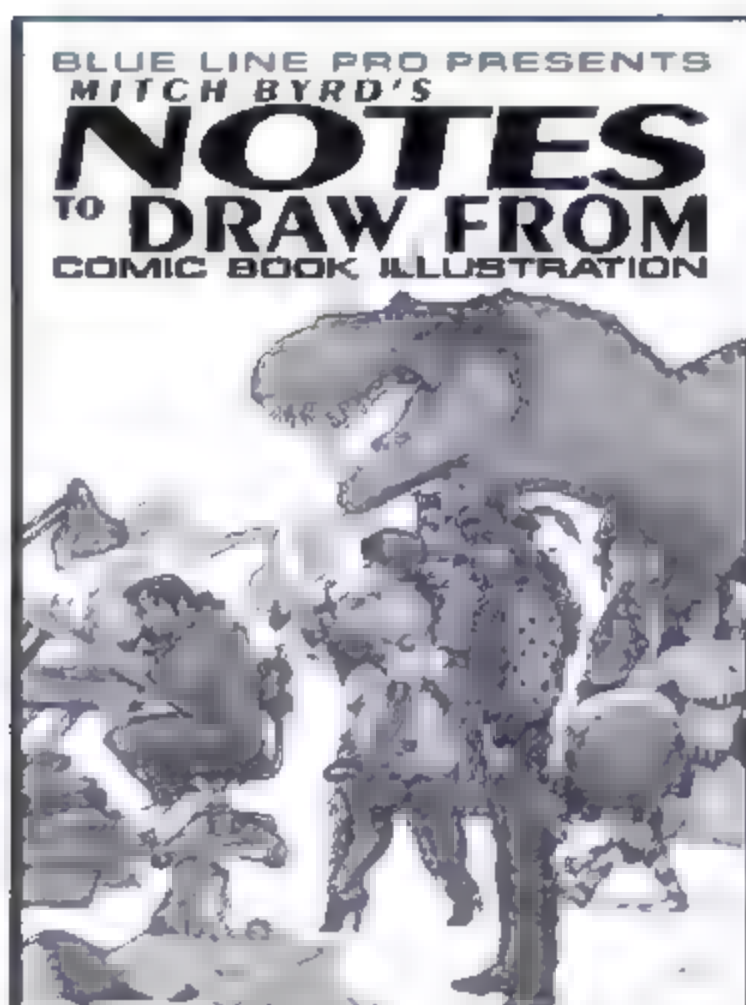
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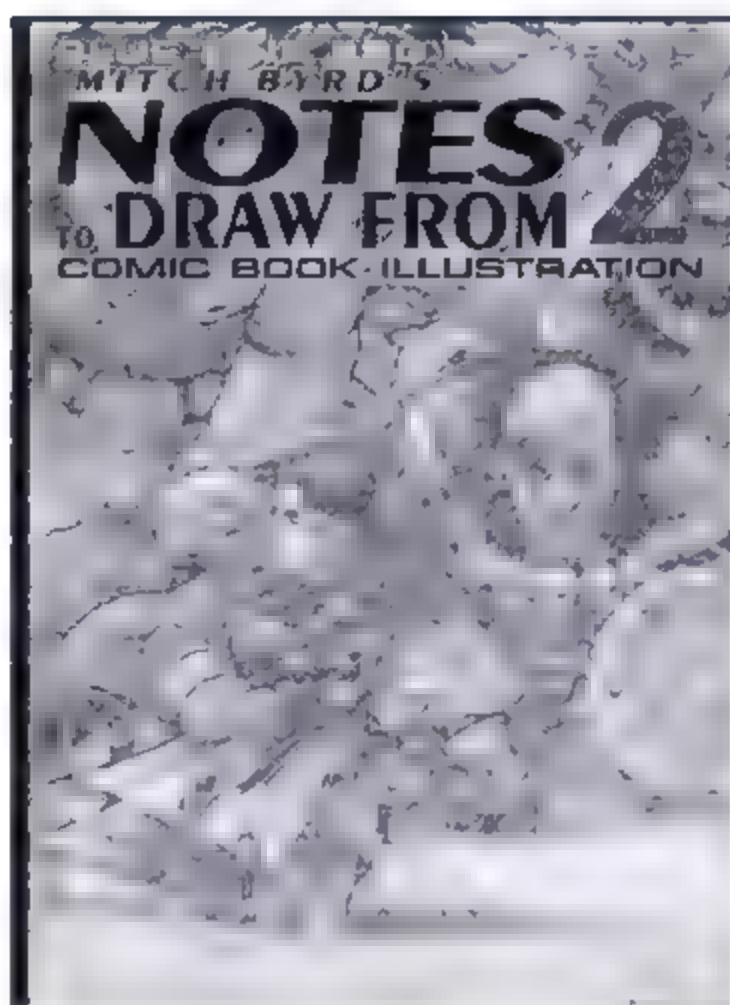


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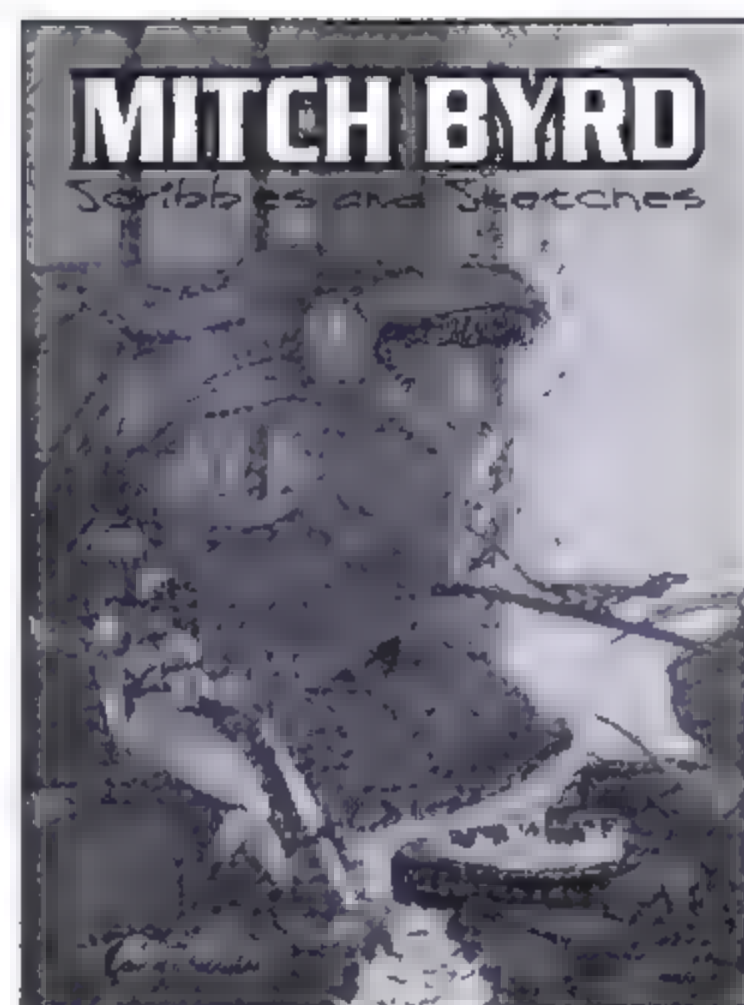
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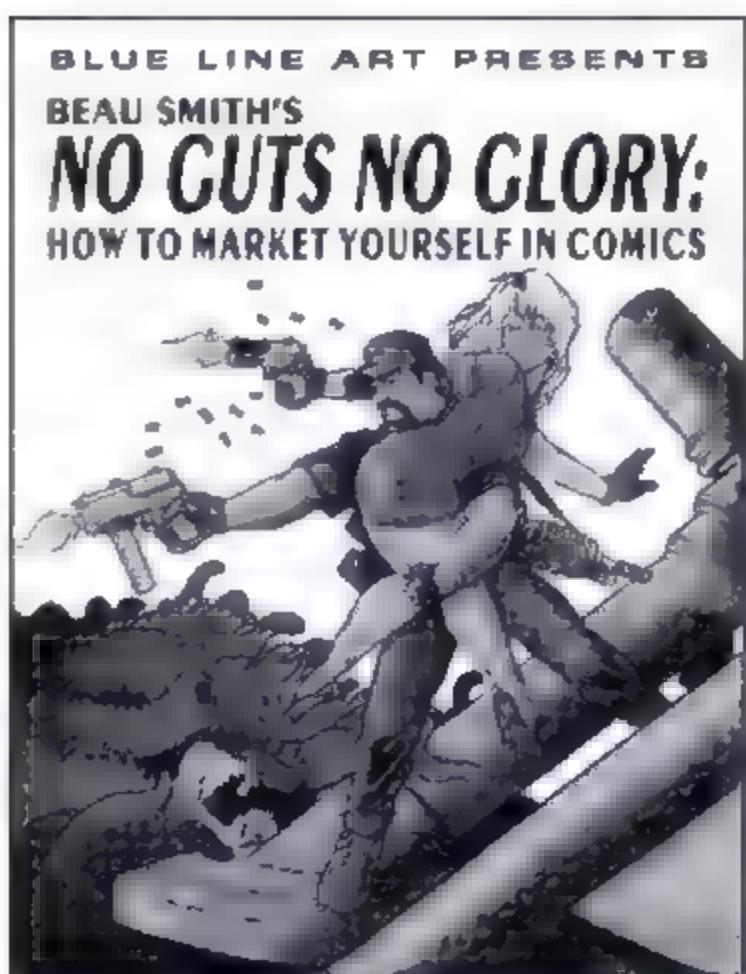
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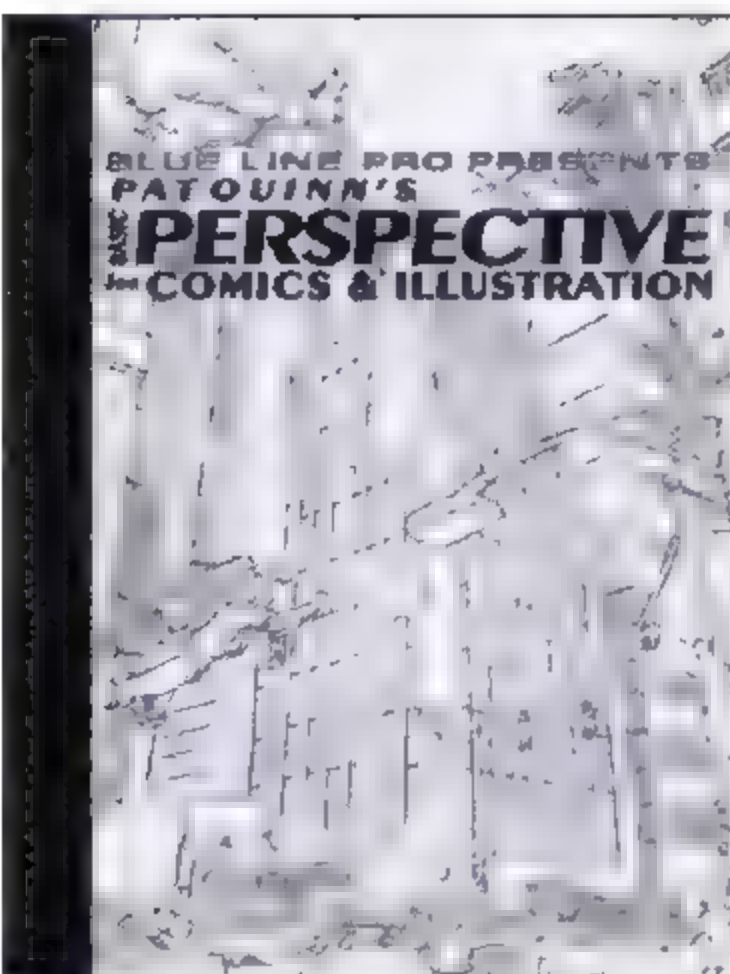


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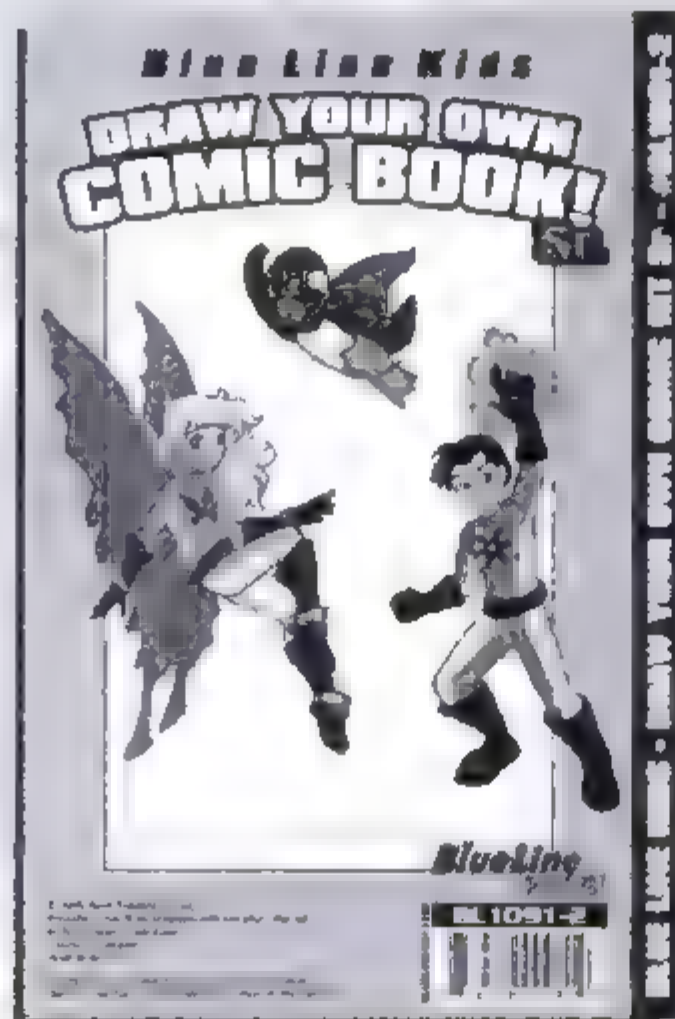
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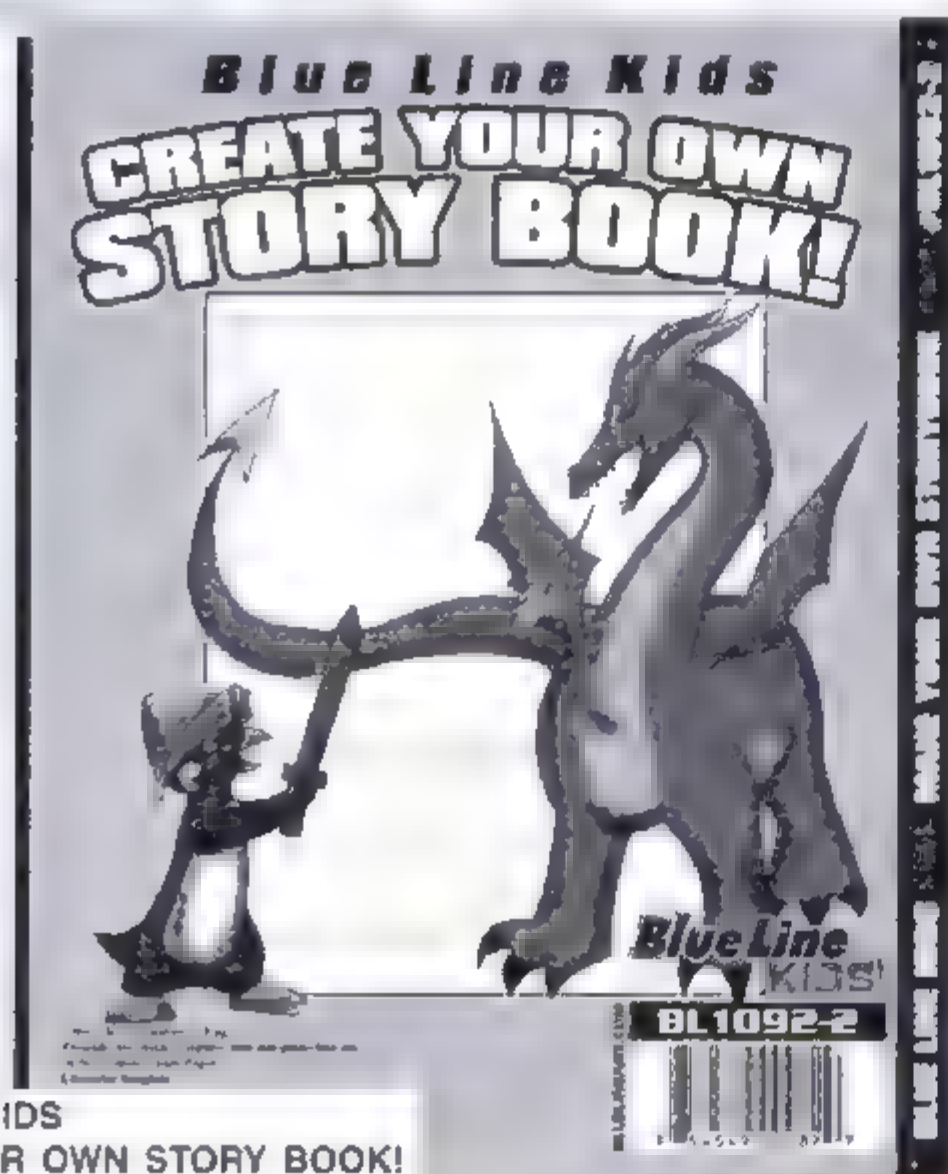
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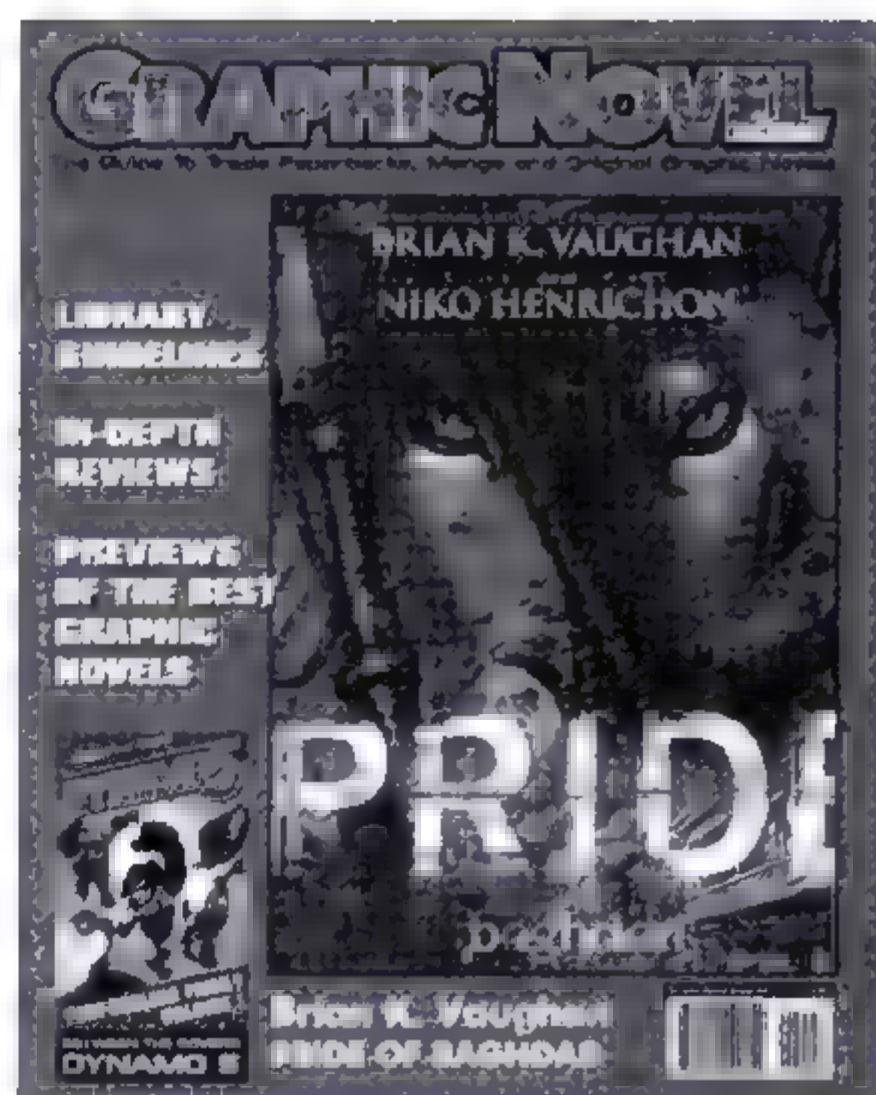
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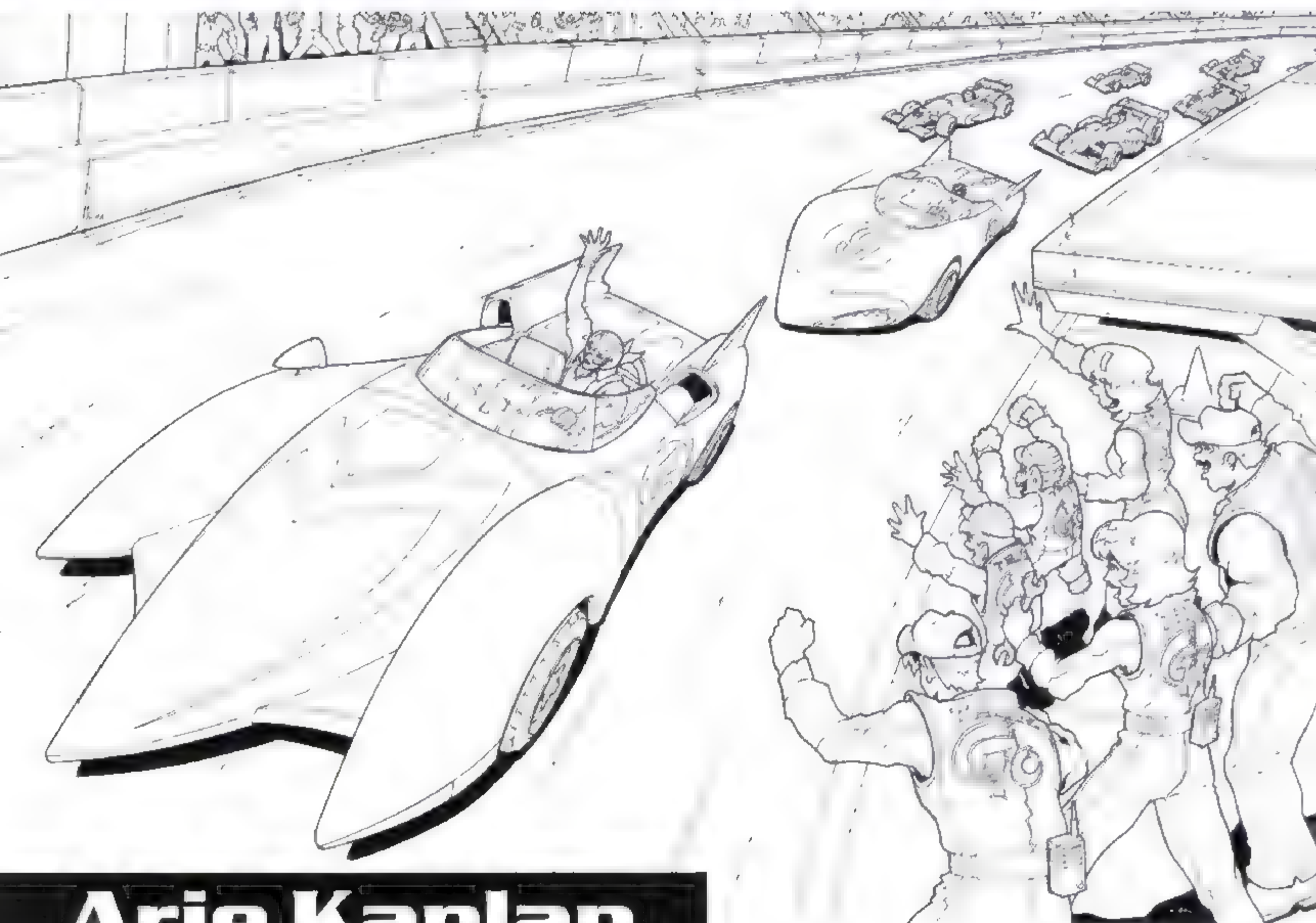


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# Arie Kaplan

## SPEED RACER

by Bill Nichols

**Sketch:** So, Arie, how did you get started?

**Arie:** I got my start as a freelance writer at *Mad Magazine*, interning there in college. And after college, I figured, why not submit some humor pieces to them, and try to get them published? I mean, how hard could it be?

**Sketch:** Probably a lot harder than you thought, huh?

**Arie:** After several soul-killing, mind-numbing months of trying to break in, I finally sold a piece to *Mad*, and that got me a foot in the door to sell another, and then another, and another. And now I'm the broken man you see before you.

**Sketch:** Well, 'dying is easy, comedy is hard', right?

**Arie:** I honestly think I started at *Mad* at just the right time in my career, because I'd been doing a little bit of stand-up, so my comedy chops were sharpened, and I was the head writer of a NYC-area sketch comedy troupe where I wrote over a hundred sketches in the span of about three or four years.

**Sketch:** That's a lot of sketch-writing! So, how did you go from *Mad* to the *Speed Racer* gig?

**Arie:** That's an interesting story. I was at the San Diego Comic Con in 2007, met with Chris Ryall at the IDW booth, intending to pitch an original graphic novel. Chris wasn't taking graphic novel pitches, but he was intrigued by the fact that I'd written a few all-ages comics, mainly a couple of *Ben 10* comics that I'd just sold to DC Comics' *Cartoon Network Action Pack*. I think he's also a *Mad Magazine* fan, so that helped. He said that IDW was thinking of doing a *Speed Racer* mini-series, and would I be interested in pitching ideas for it?

**Sketch:** Aaand...would you? LOL

**Arie:** Would I?? We set up a phone meeting for after Comic Con, and as soon as I got back to NYC, I buried myself in *Speed Racer* DVDs, did tons of research on *Speed Racer*, watched tons of anime, read lots of manga, and came up with like ten pitches for potential *Speed Racer* miniseries. And got very little sleep.



**Sketch:** Preparation is everything, right?

**Arie:** So, the big day comes, the day of the phone meeting. And the last idea on my list of pitches is the one I'm most excited about. It's an idea for a miniseries where Speed Racer discovers that he's the latest in a long line of Racers who've been around since the dawn of human civilization. And I pitched that over the phone to Chris, and he friggin' LOVED it.

**Sketch:** I'll bet!

**Arie:** I had ideas for several of the Racers like the ancient Roman Racer, Swiftus Romulus, with his pimped-out chariot, the Marcus V, and I told him that over the phone. Chris didn't even want to hear any of my other pitches, he just said to write that one up in a pitch, just a couple paragraphs long, and give it to him by Monday. This was on a Thursday or Friday. Well, over the weekend I started making this huge list, this gigantic timeline of Racers throughout history. And there was no way the written pitch was going to be a couple of paragraphs.

**Sketch:** How do you tackle writing in general, Arie, and how do you approach *Speed Racer*?

**Arie:** Gosh, how do I tackle writing in general? I tackle it with lots of heavy artillery, barbed wire, and a German tactician named Fritz who swears he was nowhere near Europe between 1939 and 1945.

**Sketch:** Blitzkrieg writing!

**Arie:** Actually, I tackle it pretty much the same way for every script. First, I write up a basic plot or springboard, which is about a paragraph or two long, depending on how long the eventual script will be. For TV animation script springboards, they're usually around that length, too. For something longer, like live-action TV or a screenplay, they're often a couple of pages. Then comes the outlining stage, when everything gets "beated" into scenes. It basically gets turned into a long list of scenes, each of which has to have a cause-and-effect relationship: one thing has to cause the next thing to happen, and so forth.



**Sketch:** Sounds like a long process already!

**Arie:** I turn the outline into a "burn draft" or a "vomit draft," where I write a really terrible, hastily-written first draft. I just sort of vomit it out of my system as fast as possible, just to see if the basic structure works so I can then sit back and take a look at it and take it apart again if need be.

I rework and polish it, and usually somewhere around that time I talk all the dialogue into a tape recorder, to make sure it sounds organic: often during this stage, I completely rework the dialogue. Speaking the

dialogue out loud is very important, because it gives me a sense of how it'll sound if an actor is saying the lines on one hand (if I'm writing a play, a TV script, or a screenplay), or if the lines are being spoken by a comic book character on the other hand. So it even helps when I'm writing comic book scripts.

And with *Speed Racer*, tackling that was like writing a very short season of a TV show. It was really interesting. I basically had to have the whole thing — the past Racer stories, the frame story with *Speed Racer* and his friends — plotted out

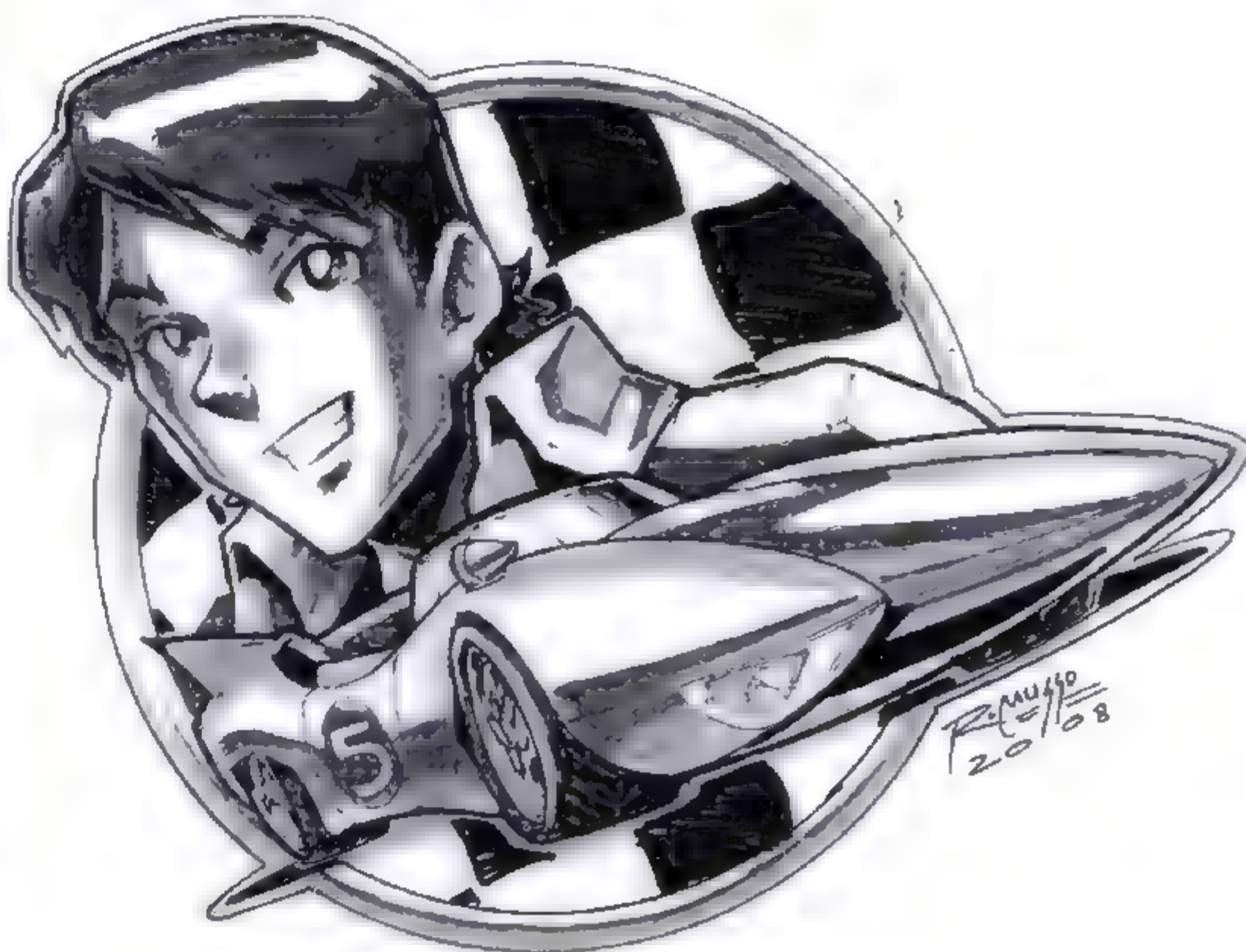


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to within an inch of itself — and written out on these big charts. I sort of structured it like those episodes of the TV series *Angel* where we flash back and forth between Angel in the present-day and Angel in the past, when he was known as Angelus. But I somehow got it done, and it was some of the most fun I've had as a writer in years

**Sketch.** Tell us about the book itself.

**Arie:** *Speed Racer: Chronicles of the Racer* is a miniseries where Speed Racer discovers that he's the latest in a long line of Racers. Now, as he learns about the many Racers who came before him, he must battle an ages-old threat to his legacy!

I was inspired to write this miniseries when I first started doing research on *Speed Racer* to pitch ideas to Chris Ryall, and I realized, "Hey, wait a minute! This character's name is actually Speed Racer!" I really wanted to capture the spirit of fun and whimsy that's so vital to stories like *Time Bandits* and *Star Wars*. And like those stories, *Speed Racer: Chronicles of the Racer* is

chock full of chariot races, knights in shining armor, princesses, dragons, pirates, monsters, giant robots, and cowboys. And lots and lots of racing.

There are a few big themes at work in *Speed Racer: Chronicles of the Racer*. One is "the more things change, the more they stay the same." For example, in each generation, there's always a Racer. There's always a Racer X analog as well. And there's always a Trixie analog.

**Sketch:** Who else is working on it?

**Arie:** And as for who else is working on this miniseries, **Robby Musso** and **German Torres** illustrated it, and **Chris Ryall** edited it. Robby and German did an INCREDIBLE job with the artwork, and I can't say enough about Chris Ryall, who's just a really cool person.

**Sketch:** I can vouch for that. Thanks, Arie!

**Sketch**



## Drawing Green Lanterns

# Kilwog and Arisia

by Joe Station

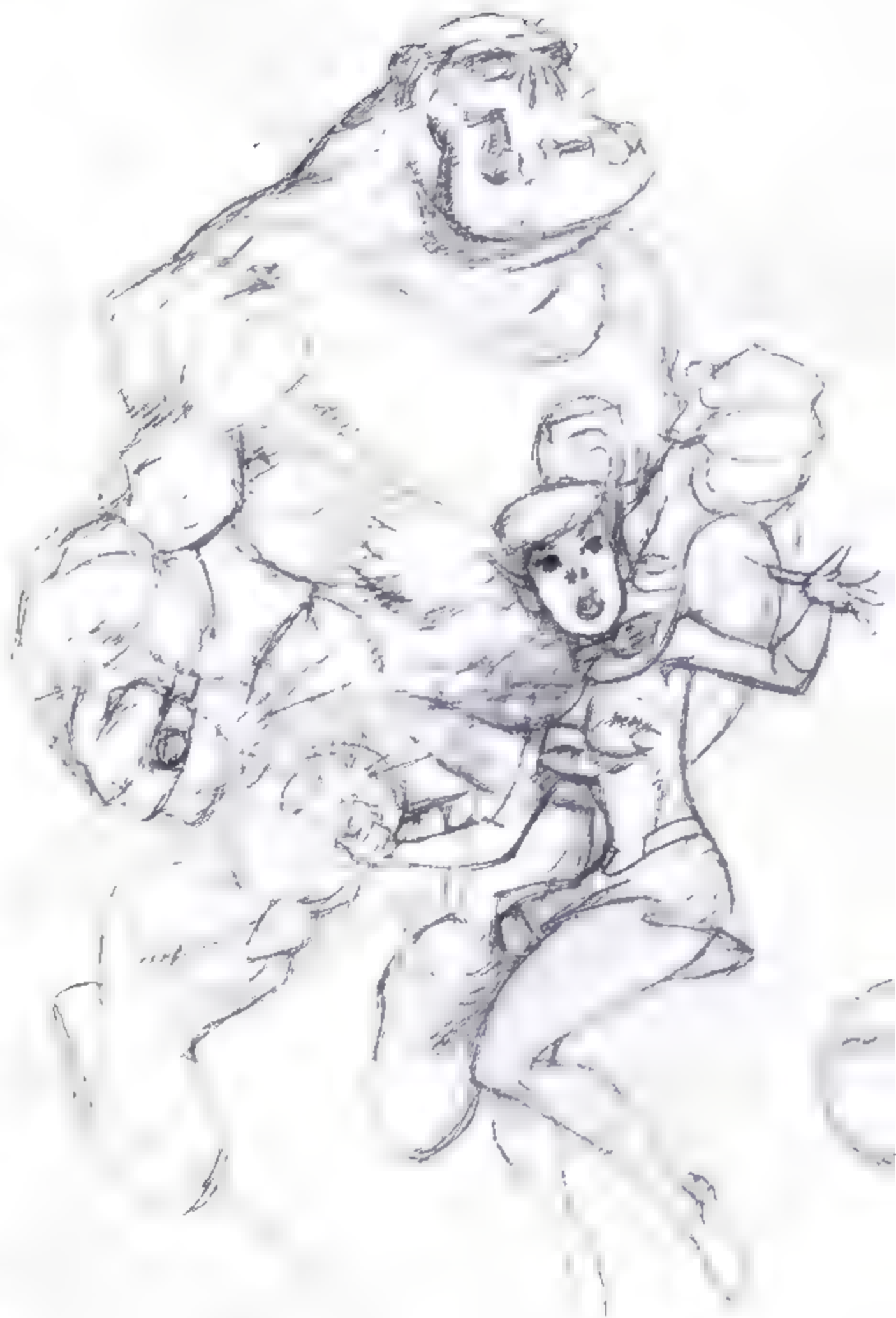
Kilowog and Arisia are two of the GLs I designed during my time on the Green Lantern titles in the 70's and 80's, and they've become prominent again during the current excellent incarnation. I decided it would be appropriate to do a drawing of the two of them for the HeroesCon program book and donate the original to the con auction.

So here's my process of doing that drawing.

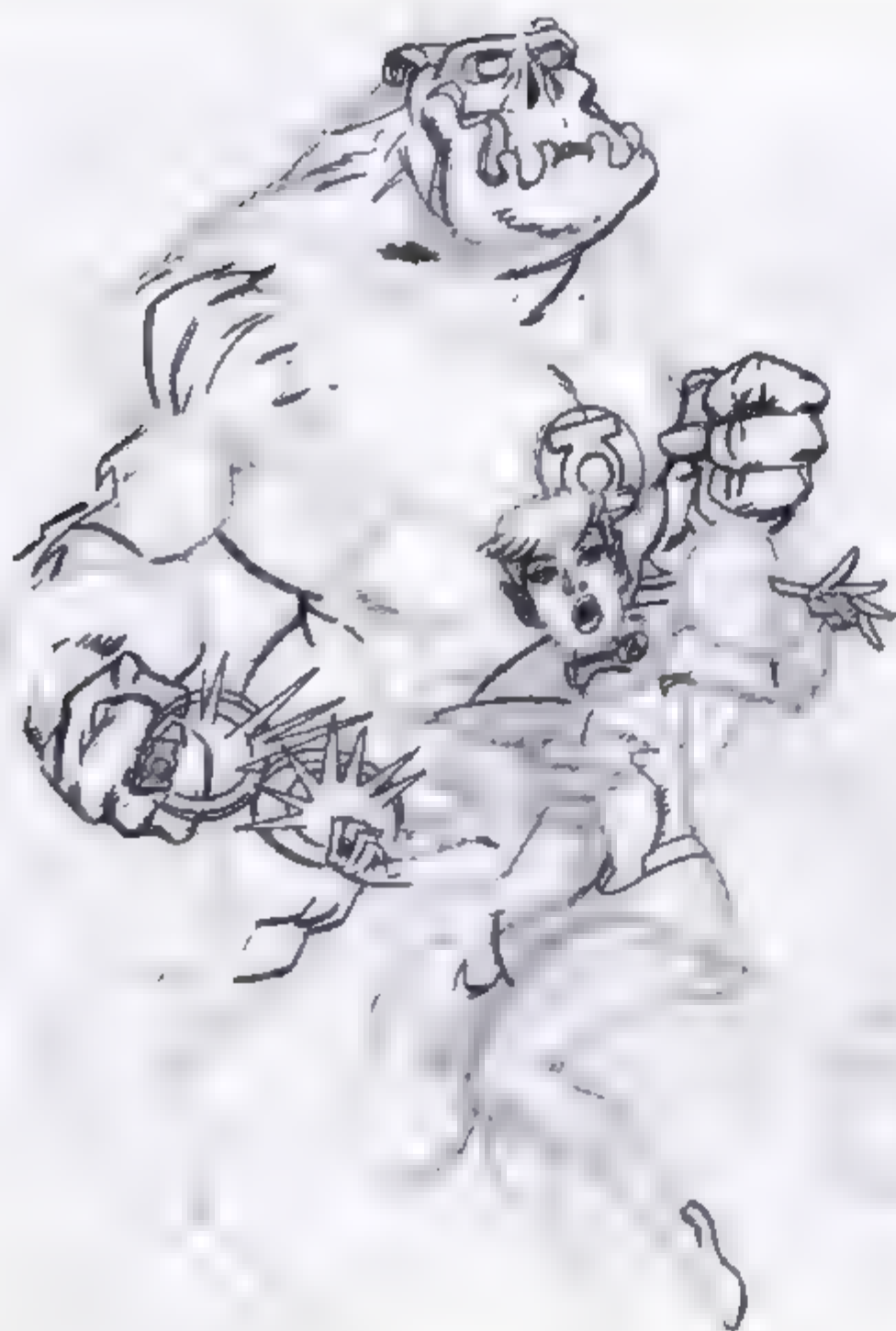
I've decided to put Arisia and the big guy out in space. It gives me a nice black background that should stand out in the program book. Also it lets me have them sort of hovering, and the flying has been one of the coolest aspects of the Lanterns.

I draw Arisia first, with just a couple of lines to hold the space behind her for Kilowog. In the Green Lantern Corps book when there were a bunch of GLs living in an A frame out in the redwoods, Arisia redesigned a lot of the GL costumes, which, of course, means they were my designs, at Steve Englehart's direction. The one I've gone with here is her first new design. She had this little cape, which was sort like a shawl. I don't remember why we dropped that; maybe it was because I had the GL emblem a bit like a pin-button up on her collarbone. Anyway, the little cape was dropped in favor of a sort of wide collar with the emblem centered. I like the little cape, especially since I can have it floating to emphasize the weightlessness of space. Capes are also good for curving lines in the composition. I pick up the curve of the cape on Arisia's left leg. I've deliberately made her head a big large and her upper body fairly small. That's something that worked well for Disney, like with Pinocchio.

When I originally designed Kilowog, my intention was that he was always be in a crouch, bent forward, with his legs bent. That way, we would know that he was a big guy, but we would see his full size only occasionally, when he would rear up to his full height. I'm having them react to something outside the top of the frame and he is fully extended. I'm







emphasizing how massive his neck is, making a nice contrast to Arisia's more delicate proportions. I have a little trouble placing Kilowog's legs in the background, but I think I've finally got them not too confusing.

I'm going to be inking this primarily with brush, but there are a few areas that need a bit more control that I can get with my brushes these days. My fingers tend to cramp up a lot these days when I use crowquills, and the Gillottes I used to like are hard to find. Two or three years ago, Andy Helfer picked up a sample pack of the Copic marker pens and told me this was what all the manga types were using. I took to them immediately and I've used them ever since for detail work and things that take a lot of control. I mostly use #1.0, 0.7, and 0.5. Sometimes, I'll use 0.3 for really small detailed panels on story pages. I don't need anything that small here. I decide to do a very defined glow around the rings, so I use templates. This is a big simple image, so I don't need a lot of small work with the Copic. I realize I'm going too long with them when I do an edge of the cape. That should be a smooth brush curve so it's time to switch implements.

Most of my brushes are really old. I'm still using a bunch of #2 and #3 Series 7 Windsor Newtons that were made when these were really well made. A long time ago, Joe Sinnott said that a good brush that seemed worn out would get a lot of its shape and spring back if you would put it away for six months to a year. That couldn't go on indefinitely, but it would keep brushes going longer you would think. I have a jar of my old WN's and I'll try them out to see what's working at the moment. I don't do a lot of my own inking anymore, (just an occasional issue of E-MAN for Digital Webbing), otherwise my brushes would all be down for good.

Kilowog and Arisia are responding to something up above them in space, so I'm keeping in mind that light source. I could have thrown Kilowog's chunky face into more shadow, but I'm just catching a bit of the shadow at the back of his head, to keep it clear. I think I'll cheat a little and keep the underside of the cape and the skirt white for contrast. I've outlined the blacks on the figures since I'm trying to keep them clean, not smudgy or rough. I'm leaning a lot toward the Wally Wood way of handling blacks against whites, although I tend more toward angular outlines of the black shapes than he did.

There's not a lot left to do now, in terms of the drawing. I fill in the blacks on the figures, making sure to leave plenty of white around the borders of shapes, and then go to the planets. In the pencils I had indicated a Wayne Boring sort of space, with a little round shadow on the dark side of a planet. I think about a Wally Wood space, but I decide against that, since that tends too easily to read as pastiche. I finally go with a Jim Aparo shadow on the planets. That's





that series of strong black strokes with lighter ones going across them at a slight angle. Seems to work pretty well. I rule some borders and fill in the big black space area. I use a different Series #7 for that, one that has lost more spring, but still has a decent point. I use that one for the fading-out-into-space effect where the GIs are looking.

The only thing to do now is a bit of white. I decide the geometric shape for the ring glow is too harsh, so I break it up a bit with the white, run it out into the surrounding black a little. Then I put a few stars in the space, try to balance them out. I use a different brush for that, one that was permanently retired long ago. And then I'm done, and the big lug and the cute girl Lanterns are on patrol out there in space.

Sketch

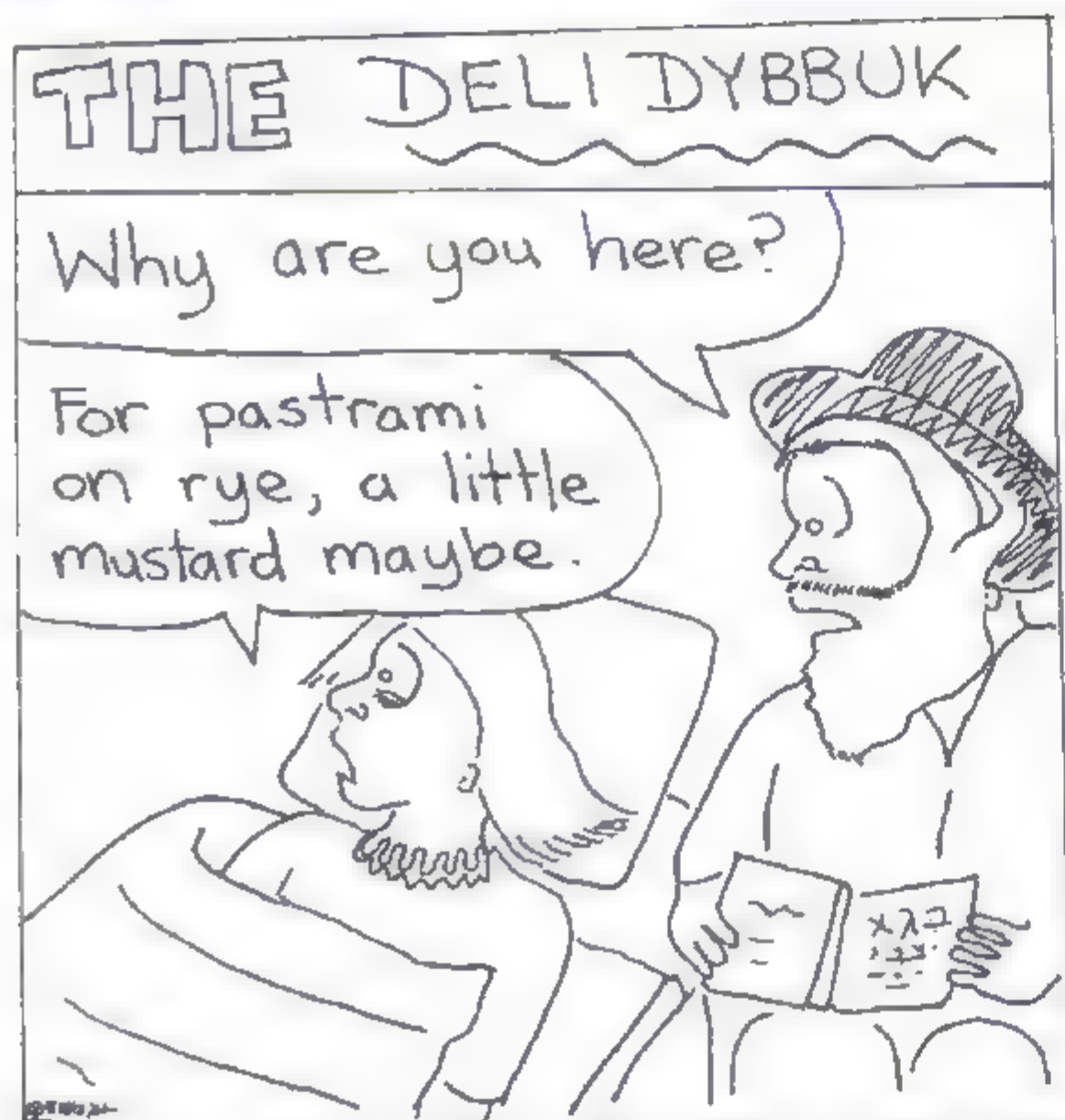
# ERASERS

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# They Sure Look Jewish: How to Draw and Publish Religious Cartoons

by Jessica Zimmer

A possessed Jewish woman lies in bed. She is tormented by an evil dybbuk (demon) that has taken over her power of speech. There are dark shadows under her eyes and a blanket pulled up over her bosom. A Chasidic (Ultraorthodox) rabbi sits by her side. Terrified, he reads from a holy book to try and drive the demon out.

At one point, the rabbi stops and asks, "Why are you here?" "For pastrami on rye, a little mustard maybe," replies the dybbuk.

Deli food, a rabbi, and an attractive MOT (member of the tribe). What's not for a publisher to like? When you have the right ingredients, you can create and sell religious cartoons for any audience.

My name is Jessica Zimmer, and I am a Jewish cartoonist. I did not start out drawing Jewish cartoons. I happen to be Jewish. Since 1998, I have been drawing cartoons about different subjects: bisexuality, the devil, immigration, children, law, pets, fitness, minority issues, and romance. In 2005, just for fun, I turned to the subject of Jewish dating.

I created a whole slew of strips about topics ranging from mismatches ("I keep kosher but I still eat crab," says a liberal Jewish girl to a horrified boy in a yarmulke) to Jewish mothers ("I don't date doctors," a Jewish girl jokes to her mother, who then loses her power of speech in disbelief). I sent a large group of these strips to Jdate.com, a well-known international Jewish dating website. I





asked if they would like to publish them in their web magazine, Jmag. Later that year, Jdate said yes. My Jewish cartooning career was born.

The publication of the Jdate strips led me to seek out other Jewish publications, most notably, J, the Jewish News Weekly of Northern California. I created a number of single-panel gag cartoons for J, including one about the Matzoh Ball family (which has a dog named "Fluffy") and the beautiful "Klezmermaids," a trio of underwater fiddle-playing Jewish girls. (When one of them hits a sour note, she exclaims, "Oy gevalt! (Oh woe!) I'm hard of herring!")

Puns and plays on stereotypes play a large part in my cartoons. I also tailor my cartoons by mentioning Jewish books, artists, movies, and political figures. One of the ways I keep my ideas fresh is by spending time with my local Jewish community. I regularly go to synagogue. There I hear funny stories that I replay in my head later and turn into funnier jokes. I also use my time in the community to learn the limits of acceptability. Listening to what other Jewish people think is "OK or not OK" helps me know the limits of my humor.

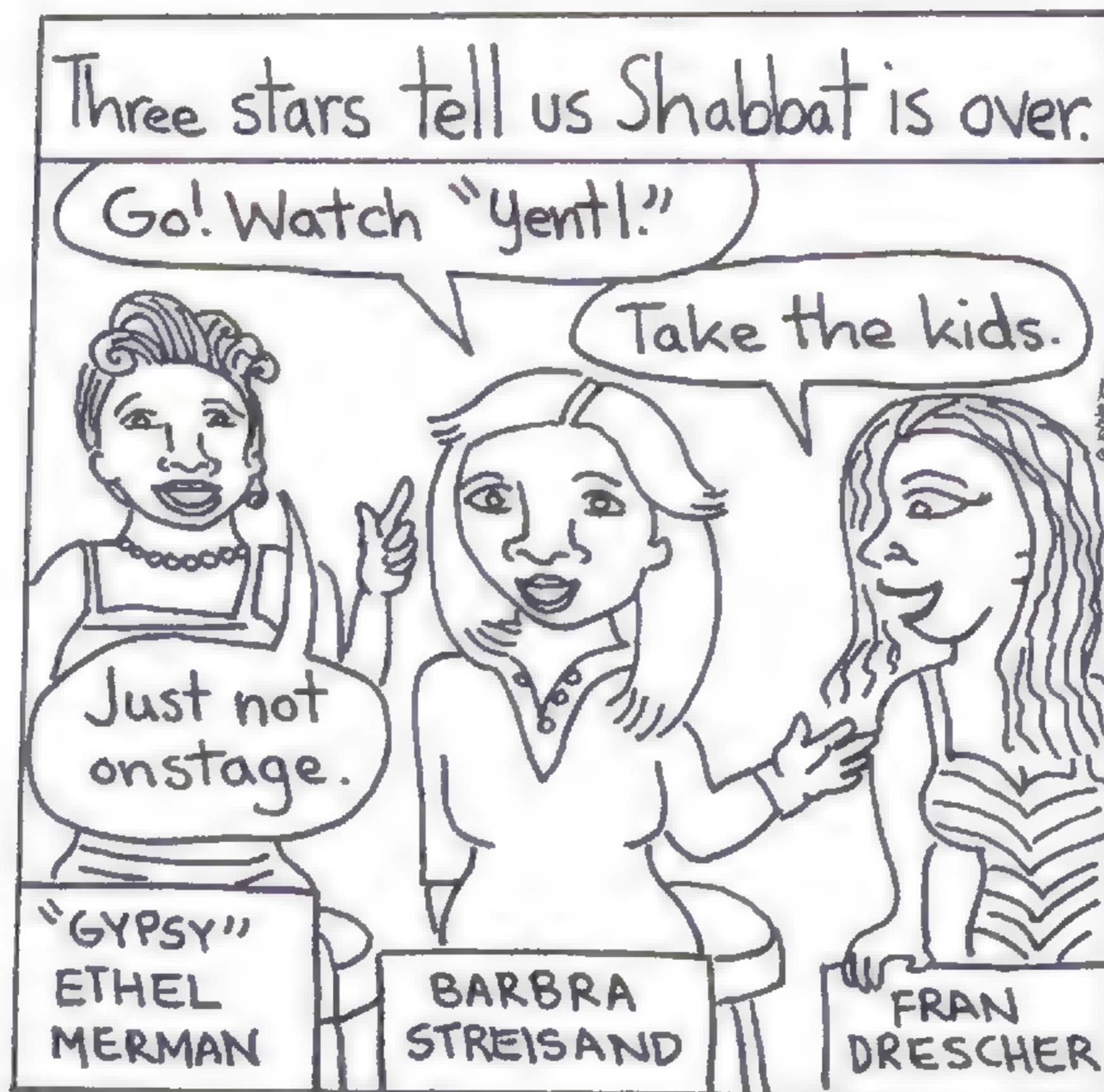


Throughout my life, I have been inspired by a number of Jewish cartoonists, including Roz Chast, who draws for the New Yorker and has worked Jewish holidays into a number of her cartoons; Ben Katchor, author of "Julius Knipl, Real Estate Photographer," which often has characters that are openly Jewish; and Steve Shcinkin, author of the Rabbi Harvey graphic novels, which re-tell Jewish folktales in the Wild West.

I draw my cartoons in a series of steps. First I get a pad and write down whatever ideas are in my head. I usually have several ideas floating around from listening to a Jewish prayer song, reading a passage in the Torah (Old Testament), spending a night at synagogue, reading an Israeli newspaper, or thinking about Jewish holidays and Jewish people I have known.

Next, I draw the dimensions of the cartoon. I create a 5-inch square for a single-panel cartoon. For a strip of four squares, I draw a 12 inch long by 3-inch wide strip split into four 3-inch blocks separated by 1/16" inch. I use a Mirado Black Warrior pencil to draw the border lines. Then I go over the borders with a Penstix No. 3015-EF 0.5 mm black





marker. After the ink has dried, I use a white Staedtler Mars plastic eraser to get rid of any pencil marks. This eraser does not tear the paper or leave any streak marks.

Sometimes I pull photographs off the Internet of people, such as Barbra Streisand, or items, such as a menorah, to make sure I get details right. The little things, like a house with a mezuzah (Jewish prayer scroll) on the front doorframe, make an audience feel at home.

When I have everything in front of me: script, tools, photos, and outline of the cartoon, I start drawing. Often I come up with more ideas than I originally wrote down. Sometimes I have to stop myself so I can eat dinner and take a walk.

My advice for people who want to draw religious cartoons is: know your audience like the back of your hand. Spend time with a community. Read its books. Watch its movies. Listen to its music. Then you can see the world through old and young, religious and secular, single and married, and converted and born-into eyes. Your experiences are your teachers as well as your raw material. When you feel like you have a good idea on your hands, write it down. I wish everyone who picks up a pen, Mazel Tov! (Good luck and Congratulations!)

Sketch



# From The Beginning

by Ron Fortier

All comics start with an idea. Mine was simple enough. What if Superman was really a jerk, behind closed doors, and he had absolutely no weaknesses. No kryptonite, nothing in this world that could bring him down and then he went and murdered someone. How could the world at large bring him to justice? It was the story problem that once worked out would become the completed plot. Once I had the solution to that problem, I then began fleshing it all out.

The idea kept buzzing around in my head for many, many years. Over time I added to it mentally, having the victim be a Batman like figure to add emphasis to the actual crime. Superman clone kills Batman clone. Then I began imagining this was a government made Super guy and the code name for the project was Shining Armor, referencing classic heroes who always come to the rescue like knights in...*shining armor!*

At cons I would bring it up to various artists always hoping to find the just the right guy or girl who would want to share the project with me. A few years ago I even had one artist do up a few character sketches only to back off afterward. Although he loved the concept, he didn't feel competent enough to take on a full comic project yet. So it was shelved once more. Then about six months ago, while scouting out the Digital Webbing Art forums, I found several pages of comic work posted by a fellow from Brazil named Danyael Lopes. He penciled, inked, lettered and colored four sequential pages wherein the Justice League of America tried to stop a rampaging Hulk in the process of destroying a downtown street. Danyael's art was so fantastic, I immediately wrote to him and suggested the possibilities of our working together on a project.

Danyael replied and asked what I had in mind. So I sent him my one word hook, What would happen if Superman was a jerk and he killed Batman? How could he be brought to justice? Danyael was immediately intrigued and wrote asking me to elaborate. Now let me explain, when we initially started corresponding, we traded website addresses to quickly learn more about each other as creators, our background and prior achievements.

What I learned was that Danyael Lopes is a successful, working graphic illustrator in Brazil. This is important only in that anything he did for me would be done purely on speculation. I couldn't pay him for his time and effort, which is his livelihood. We discussed this up front and Danyael said, if he liked the overall proposal, he would participate up to the completion of a presentation package for us to show respective publishers. Also I could not impose any kind of a deadline on him, as he had to work this in among his paying commitments. All of which was perfectly reasonable and I had absolutely no problems with.

Now it was time to write up the entire story for him in detail. I knew if I couldn't sell him on it, then I'd be back to square one. Another factor I had to consider was the fact that English was not Danyael's primary language. This meant my own prose had to be very succinct and clear all the time. There would be no place for witty nuances here. To do so would risk his not comprehending my intentions. Over the following weekend I wrote the entire story out in a very basic, simple narrative. This is what I sent him.

## SHINING ARMOR

A Mini-Series by Ron Fortier

Concept idea - What if Superman was a jerk and accidentally killed Batman? Could the world bring him to trail? Or would he become a super powered despot thinking himself above the laws of man? And how could he be made to pay for his crime?

### THE BEGINNING

In the year 2020 the European Alliance has a moon base with 200 scientists from all nations stationed there. The French and Germans have a city under the Atlantic called New Atlantis and the United States military launches a program to create a superman using nano-technology. They hope to create a hero who will be a modern knight in shining armor for the US.

They ask for volunteers and one of these is a Sergeant named Jack Miller. Of the hundred men who volunteer, most of them die or are crippled. Miller is the only success. His new body is impervious to any harm, it is completely indestructible to anything short of a direct atomic bomb.



The thing is Miller is a selfish person who thinks only about himself. Abused as a child by his alcoholic father, he doesn't have any real friends and is a bully most of the time. With becoming a real superman, he gets meaner. In particular, he is attracted to one of the beautiful women scientists on the project, Doctor Sylvia Reynolds. He tries to get romantic with her but she refuses him time and time again. Until he gets so annoyed, one night he gets drunk, breaks into her apartment and rapes her. When she goes to the base commanders, they tell her to keep her mouth shut and dismiss her with lots of money.

They do not want their program embarrassed before it even gets started.

## TWO YEARS LATER

Jack Miller, promoted to Captain, has become America's first real super hero, AMERICAN EAGLE. He mainly stops criminals and saves people from natural disasters like floods or earthquake. All the while he is a figurehead for the U.S. Military and all the public loves him. Children form American Eagle fan clubs and there are toys and comic books on sale starring him.

Thing is, when he's alone in his private suite of apartments in Washington, Miller has parties all the time and the government provides him with famous porno stars to satisfy his hedonistic appetites. All this is kept hidden from the public who believe him to be the all around clean-cut good guy.

## THE NIGHT COMMANDO

One of the American Eagle's biggest fans is an African American karate instructor named Powell Jones. He lives in Philadelphia and his dojo is in the worst slums of that city. Every day he sees how illegal drugs are ruining the young people in his community and he is fed up with it. One night, after watching American Eagle on the TV News, Jones decides to follow in his idol's path. He dons a mask and attacks a big known drug-dealer. Using his martial skills, Jones badly beats up the dealer and his men and tells them to get out of the neighborhood or he'll keep beating them up every time he sees them.

Soon word of this new masked vigilante spreads throughout the city and reporters begin to write stories about him. Stories that make their way to the national press and American Eagle. When Miller finds out there is someone else being a hero, he gets very upset. He does not want anyone sharing his fame and glory. He wants to be the only one. His Press Manager, a small, fat man named Wally Fauls tries to assure him that he has nothing to worry about, that this new hero is a nobody. But Miller won't listen and decides to go out and find Night Commando and tell him to stop.

American Eagle finds a Philadelphia reporter named Henry Gonzalez who knows how to contact Night Commando and has Gonzalez set up a meeting with the black hero in a back alley one night. What Miller does not know is that Gonzalez decides to go and hide in that alley with his camera and tape recorder so that he can record the first meeting of the two heroes. So he's hiding behind a big dumpster when the two men meet.

Powell Jones is so excited to meet the man who has inspired him. He is shocked when American Eagle refuses to shake his hand and then tells him to quit being a hero. He wants him to give up being Night Commando forever. Jones is both surprised and then disgusted by this and he tells Miller he won't do it. He likes being able to help the people in his neighborhood fight crime and drug lords. Miller warns him if he continues it will be bad for him. Jones tells American Eagle to "Go to hell! Asshole!" Without thinking, Miller slaps Jones, knocking him across the alley into a brick building, breaking his neck and killing him instantly. Miller is completely stunned by what he has done. It was NOT his intention to really hurt Jones, only to scare him. But because he lost his temper, the man is dead. Scared and frightened, American Eagle flies away.

After he does so, Henry Gonzalez steps out into the open with camera and recorder, he looks at the body of Night Commando and starts taking pictures of it. He realizes by being a witness to this murder and having the proof, he now has the greatest news story in history. He is going to be a very famous man.

## AMERICAN EAGLE EXPOSED

After Gonzalez's story breaks in the newspapers and on national TV, the Defense Department tries to cover up for American Eagle saying it is all lies. They claim the figure in the pictures is a super villain disguised as American Eagle. But the voice experts say the recording matches his voice exactly. The more the Generals try to cover up the crime, the angrier Jack Miller becomes until in front of a press conference, he loses his temper again and confesses to the world. "Okay, I killed the guy! So what? You can't do anything about it!"

And with that superman Jack Miller becomes a criminal outlaw who refuses to let the police arrest him. The American people are outraged and letters and phone calls flood Washington demanding the President have him arrested and put on trial. Having no choice, the President tells the military to go arrest Miller. They try, but he is superman. He destroys their tanks, missiles, everything. In the end they are forced to give up. The only thing that might stop him is a nuclear bomb and they don't want to use that, as it would kill thousands of innocent people around him.



Miller goes on TV and tells the whole world he is no longer going to be a puppet to the army and the government. He is finished being a good boy scout. From now on he's going to live like he wants to live, as an all-powerful being who can do whatever he wants any time. And so he goes from being a superhero to a super villain.

## BISHOP LUONGA

As the months go on, members of the United Nations, working with the United States, continually debate the problem of having a super criminal living on earth and how can they possibly punish him for his crime. Then at one such assembly, the African religious leader, Catholic Bishop Walter Luonga suggests that the entire world do, on a global scale, what the people in his land did years ago to an outlaw in the village. They exiled him. "But now can you exile a super being?" one of the UN members asks. "By ignoring him," the gray haired Bishop responds. "If everyone in the entire world simply refuses to talk with Jack Miller, to behave as if he does not exist, eventually this will have the effect of expunging him from all social contact." "No man is an island," Luonga argues. "Every man needs to feel he belongs to the world."

## YOU ARE DEAD TO US

And so Bishop Luonga goes on TV, broadcast around the globe, telling everyone that the outlaw Jack Miller is not to be spoken to anymore. He is dead to everyone.

Well when Miller hears this, he thinks it is the funniest thing he has ever heard. He thinks it is impossible for people to simply ignore him and thus punish him. Already he's surrounded by lots of people. Thing is, those people are all leeches who simply want things from him. He flies off to find Bishop Luonga and starts to threaten him, but the Bishop doesn't answer him. Angered, Miller grabs the Bishop and says if he does not say something to him, he will kill him immediately. To which the old man says, "Then I will say something to save my life. No, because I wish to speak to you." And so the Bishop's plan is effective and Miller soon begins to understand it. None of the good, decent people of the world will have anything to do with him. Ever! He keeps trying to threaten people to deal with him, but they always reply in the same fashion. No good man, woman or child wants to have anything to do with him.

When Miller realizes this, he chases off the drug lords and prostitutes that surround him and closes himself away from the public. A few days later he has completely vanished and no one knows what happened to him. The Bishop's idea worked and so it is believed Miller has gone into self-exile somewhere.

## EIGHT YEARS LATER

Miller has been living in a cave in the Himalayas for the eight years as a hermit. He has been working in a monastery as janitor/repairman. He has a long beard and no one knows he's the former super hero/villain. He has learned to be content with his simple life.

But that is about to change as an alien space race suddenly materializes from another galaxy and attacks the Earth demanding it to surrender. These are lizard like humanoid that wish to enslave the people of the earth. All our defenses are totally destroyed within the first few days of fighting, as the aliens have superior weapons. It appears mankind is doomed.

Then all of a sudden Miller reappears, flies into space and completely destroys the entire alien space fleet except for the command ship. He tells them to go home and never return because if they do, they will find an entire army of super beings waiting to destroy them. The aliens flee, vowing never to return.

Miller flies back to the earth to tell the President the enemy has been defeated and that he will return to his exile. What he finds waiting for him is a thousands of people applauding and cheering him for saving the world. He is shamed and tells them they should not applaud him, he is a bad man and should go to jail. But the President says he will pardon him, if Miller promises to never again break the law, but rather defend it always. Before Miller can reply, out of the crowd comes Sylvia Reynolds and with her a ten-year-old boy who looks exactly like Miller. She tells him that the boy is his son and now she wants him to know his father. Miller falls to his knees crying and hugs the boy.

In the end, he becomes the super hero he was meant to be. He has become a humble, serving soul who forever will defend all mankind.

THE END



# YOU NEED TO START IN BLACK AND WHITE

## INKS AND WHITE OUT



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### the pitch

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### THE ARTIST RESPONDS

After sending this off to Danyael, I waited on pins and needles. Finally he replied saying he loved the entire thing and very much wanted to be a part of it. He would proceed by doing up several character sketches and then later maybe a sequential sample of maybe four to five pages. Of course I was thrilled and began to wonder what his take on these characters would be?

A few weeks later he sent in his full color pin-up illustration of the main character, Jack Miller; American Eagle. And blew me away!! It was all I'd hoped for and so much more. In looking at the art, what surprised me was Danyael's strong sense of design. Lots of artists can draw, but designing is something else altogether. What I mean by this is when looking at the costume he whipped up for American Eagle, it looks at first to be standard hero-ware, then if you see how he drew the chest logo, the goggles, etc. you begin to grasp the underlying theme he is establishing. This is clearly the Do-Gooder Boy Scout figure I described in my set-up. This is the image that children all over the world respect and love. Danyael via the look of the character completely reinforces the characterization.

Which means at this point in the process, Shining Armor was no long just mine. By his creativity and artistic input, Danyael had become very much the co-creator and now we had a real comic project in the works. So what next? Well, Danyael asked me to get busy writing a sample script for him to do after he finished more character renderings. I fired back asking if there was any particular scene he had in mind. It is always a good idea to work on those things your artist likes more than others.

Danyael said he thought it would be fun to see the confrontation between American Eagle and the President of the United States, after he had committed his crime and become an outlaw. Again, this was really smart thinking on Danyael's part. It would have been easy enough to have chosen the dramatic money-shot scene where Eagle drives Night Commando into that brick wall and kills him but that would not be reflective of the true story we want to tell. In the end, Shining Armor is really about someone who does something bad, tries to escape his own conscience, then in the end must confess his sins and find redemption. With the confrontation between Miller and the President, we had the opportunity to explore that shift in the characters life from phony hero to belligerent, angry criminal.

I got busy again and wrote the five-page script. It follows in an upcoming issue of Sketch

Sketch



# The Inkwell Awards Results

## Inkblots

by Bob Almond



Welcome back, ink aficionados! For those of you who've been counting down the days until The 2008 Inkwell Awards voting period ends (which I can only imagine is every single one of you reading this) I can now announce that the much-anticipated results are in! For our debut year we pulled in almost **five thousand** ballots, a huge success in my opinion, over the two month voting period (May-June). I'd like to shout out a special thanks to **Jimmy Tournas** who was solely at the front lines collecting and exclusively tabulating the flood of ballots on his computer while simultaneously busy with his everyday life schedule and surely trying to keep his sanity while answering my tsunami of calls and emails.

Also special consideration and respect goes out to fellow Inkweller **Tim Townsend** who many folks voted for leading to his winning of two categories only to have Tim respectfully pass them on (you can read more about this at [www.inkwellawards.com/results.html](http://www.inkwellawards.com/results.html)). You're an inking hero, t-dog!

Ok, I'll shut up now and resume my babbling after the main event. And the Inkwell award goes to

### Favorite Inker (Retro)

Terry Austin (winner-tie)  
Joe Sinnott (winner-tie)  
Tom Palmer (runner-up)

### Favorite Inker (Modern)

Danny Miki (winner)  
Norm Rapmund (runner-up)

### Favorite Finisher/Embellisher (Retro)

Tom Palmer (winner)  
Joe Sinnott (runner-up)

### Favorite Finisher/Embellisher (Modern)

Kevin Nowlan (winner)  
Norm Rapmund (runner-up)

### Most-Adaptable Inker

Danny Miki (winner)  
Tom Palmer (runner-up)

### Most Prolific Inker

Danny Miki (winner)  
Joe Sinnott (runner-up)

### Props Award

Danny Miki (winner)  
Mark Irwin (runner-up)

### The Call of Duty Award

Bob Almond (winner)  
Tim Townsend (runner-up)

### MVP Award

Danny Miki (winner)  
Tim Townsend (runner-up)

### The Joe Sinnott Award

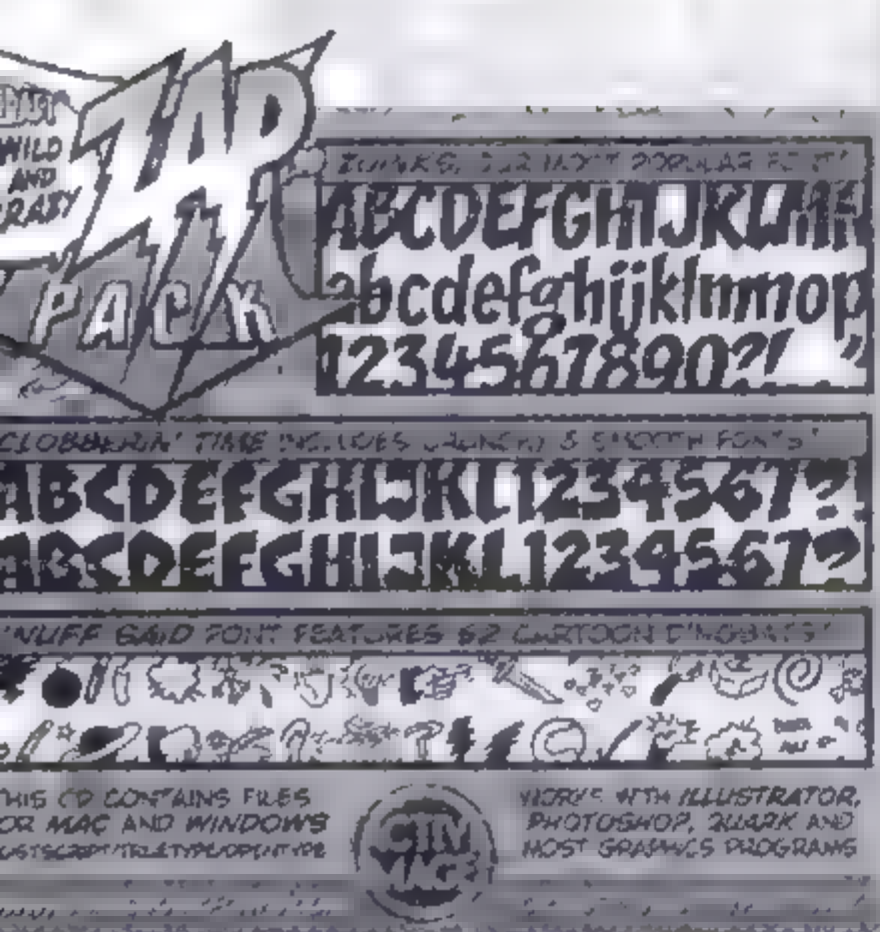
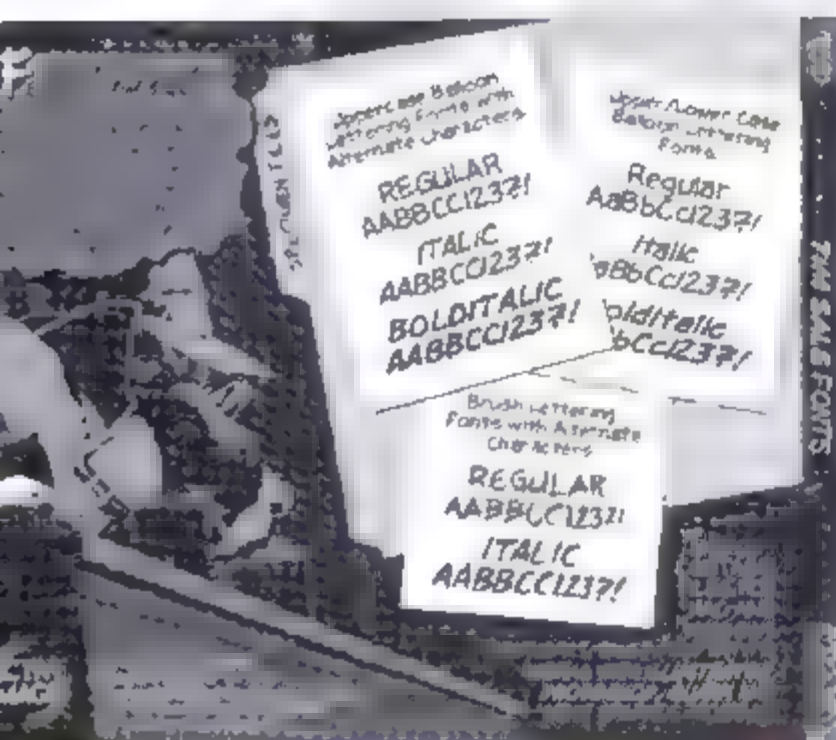
Joe Sinnott (winner)  
Al Williamson (runner-up)

Congratulations to all the winners and runners up. By the time this column is printed the trophies will have been already produced and shipped to the winners. You can find a full list of all the nominees who received votes in the various categories on the site results page (link posted above) and you can read the official acceptance statements from the winners on the home page and the press page [www.inkwellawards.com/press.html](http://www.inkwellawards.com/press.html).

I see this effort of ours as a constant work in progress as we learn from our fledgling mistakes and annually move forward. It was nice to have open ballots in our inaugural year in order to see what kind of response we could get from the community and public with the voting options wide open. But we will be altering the procedure next year in order to be more in line with what other awards events are doing. This will consist of us polling various reliable resources within the industry to arrive at five nominees for each category which the public and community can then vote on. After we finalize all the details the new process and rules will be posted on the site. We will also have new categories, edited categories, and some deleted categories, after seeing how the initial ones performed. And voting will be limited to only one month (maybe April or May). Please bookmark the website and visit it often in order to be updated on all the changes as I will probably not have a full column posted here before the next outing. Plus at the same time you can check out new site features from our resident scribe **Daniel Best** over the coming months like news, profiles, interviews, tutorials, etc. to keep you entertained and informed as you eagerly await the 2009 Inkwell awards. And we now even have an Inkwell Awards forum up and live so please also check that out and participate often. We will not let up on our mission of educating and informing as well as bringing recognition and appreciation to our oft unsung ink artists and their craft. And thanks to all of you who took the time to participate, vote, spread the word, provide advice and assistance, and simply offer general support. We sincerely appreciate each and every one of you.



# LETTERING FONTS



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## spotlight

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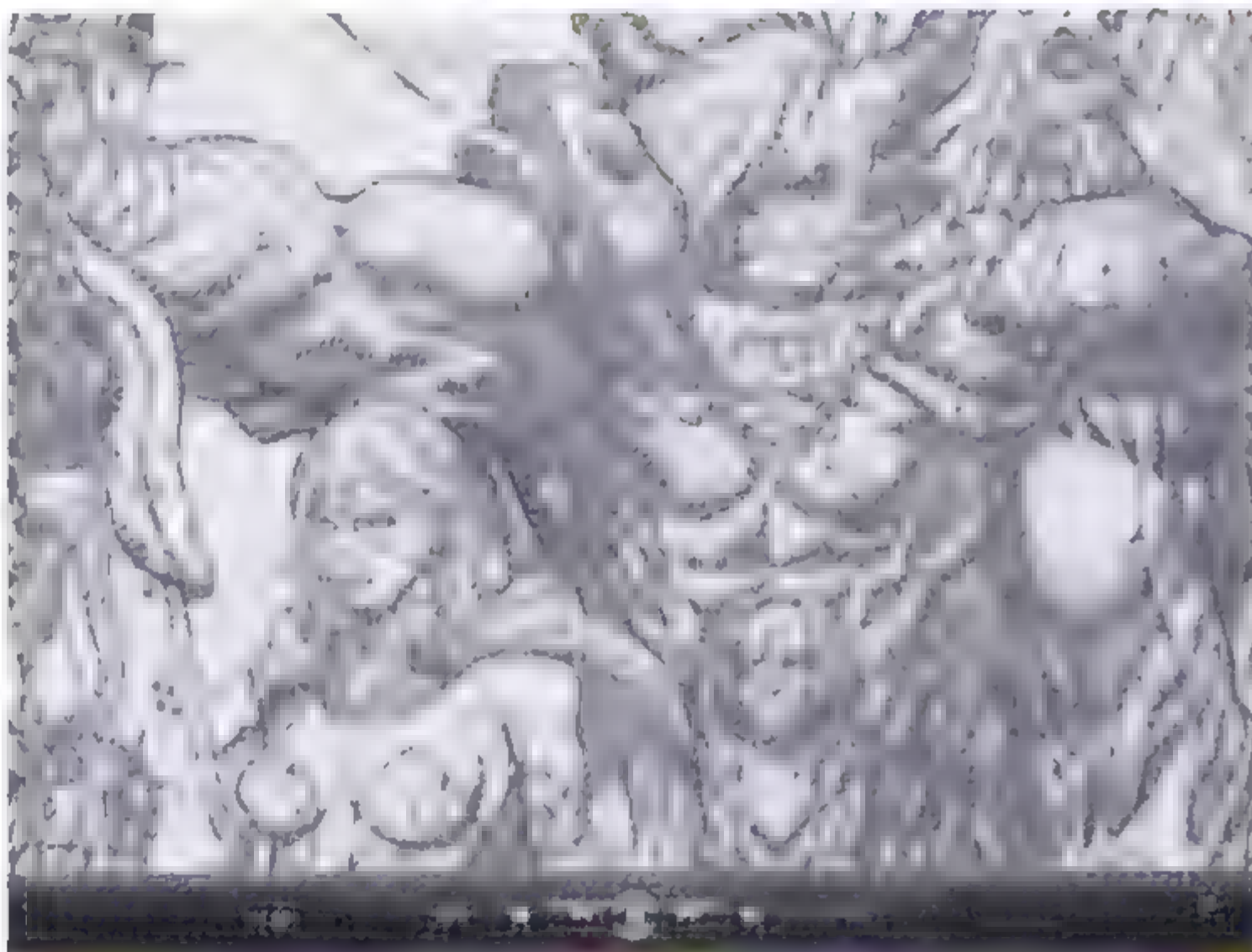
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Bonus

130 minutes

\$48.99

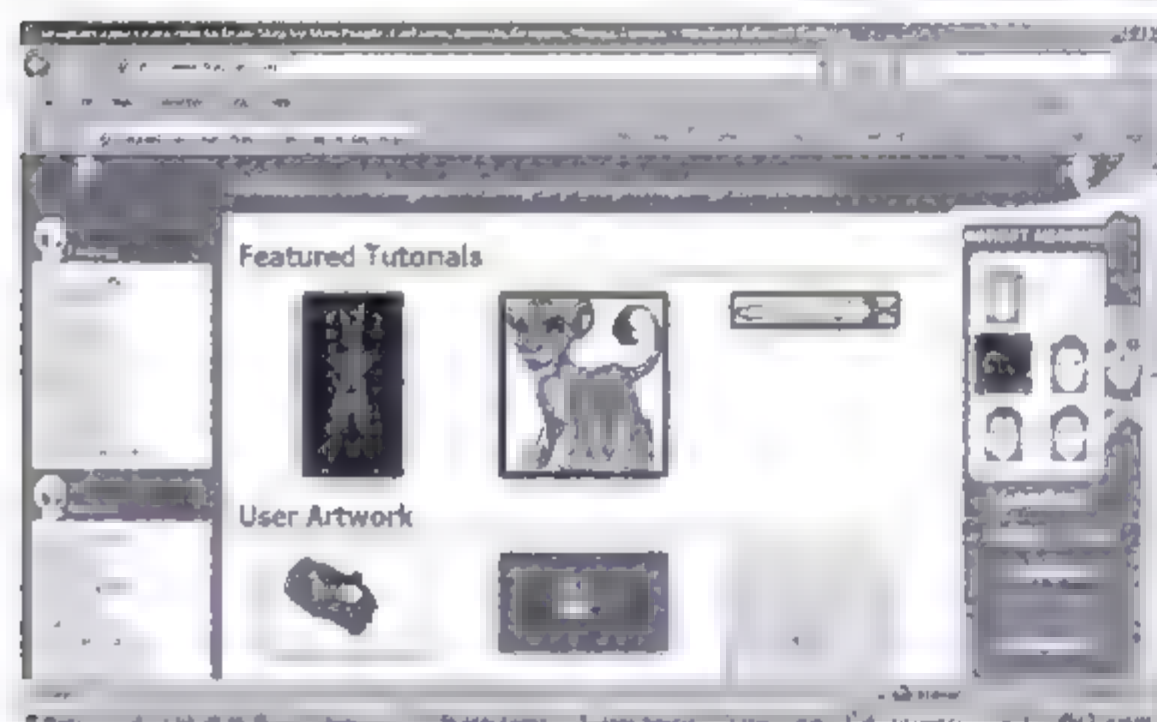






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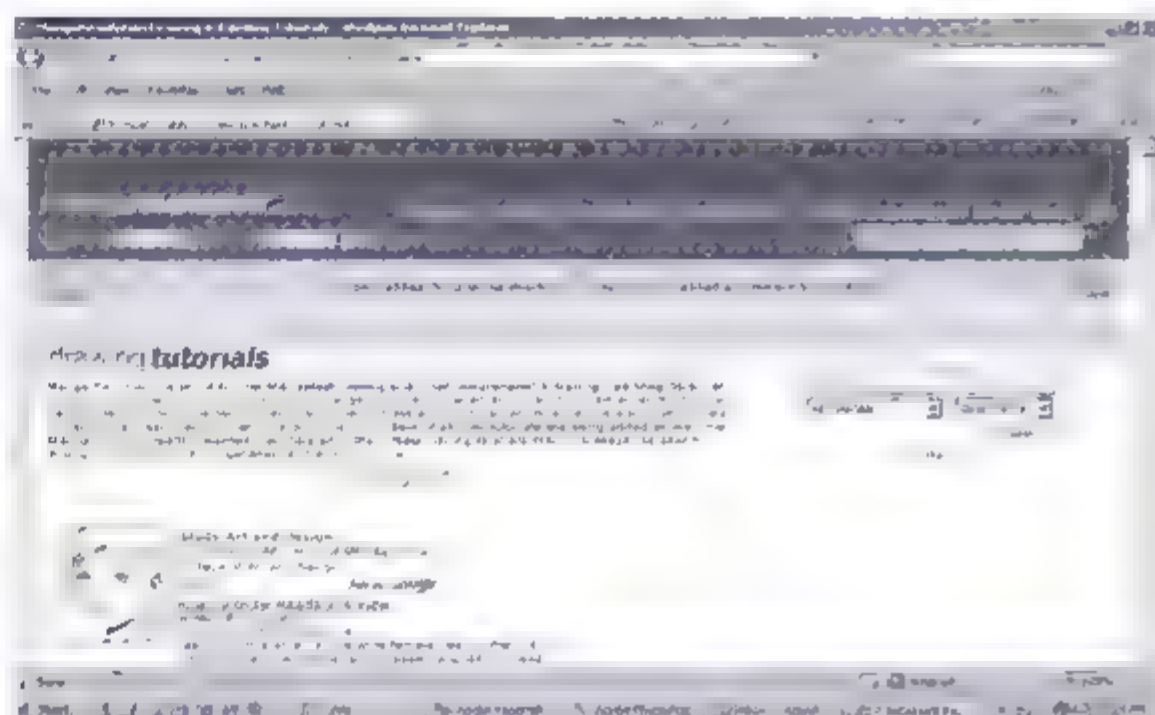
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# Letters Forum

All letters received will be considered for publication. Letters published will be done so as received in regards to spelling, punctuation, etc. However, letters may be edited for length, language, and other considerations. All letters should be signed by the writer as well as including the writer's legibly printed name, address, and contact numbers (phone, fax, e-mail). Opinions expressed are those of their respective letter writer and not necessarily shared by Blue Line. While open as a critical forum, it is Blue Line's hope and intention that correspondence maintain constructive and positive elements of criticism. Simple name calling, rumor mongering, and/or maliciousness is not of interest. Unless our editor does it.

Please send your e-mail messages to [sketchletter@blueinnyer.com](mailto:sketchletter@blueinnyer.com). With all letters, please state clearly if you wish to have your address printed. We look forward to hearing from you.

Dear Sketch,

Is it just me or does Bob Almond only talk about his group of friends? I want "How To's". What are your techniques for inking hard surfaces compared to cloth? Does he know how to ink or only talk? The only sample we've seen has been Sean Parsons.

Is it too much to ask that you offer up more step-by-step how to instructions instead of the normal B.S.

I pay my hard earn cash for this magazine and I expect to learn something. Inking is something I'm tackling at this time and Sketch is dropping the ball with keeping Bob Almond on as a "consultant" when consulting is the only thing he's done. Give us some instructions and show us how to ink.

The Art Of section seem to be page fillers. Is that what this magazine has become: over-winded creators and page fillers? I thought when you took my suggestion on upgrading the paper choice you were going in the right direction, but now it looks like the only direction Sketch is taking is down.  
William Avery

Wow you said and mouth full...  
Hmmm. I better hand this one over to Bill.  
Robert

William,

One of the first creators who graciously came on board with Sketch way back with issue 27 was Bob Almond. Actually, one of the first pages of original comic

art I owned (other than my own) was a page from Warlock and the Infinity Watch penciled by Angel Medina and inked by Bob. He is one of the inkers who is constantly working in the business and is full of insights about inking, its history, and techniques.

Through Inkblots, we've seen the creation of the Inkwell Awards this year, which Bob started and is determined to make next year's even grander! I believe he will. You can check all that out at: [www.theinkwellawards.com](http://www.theinkwellawards.com). The Awards are named for the Inkwell Yahoo group, but they're open for inkers everywhere.

And, one of the columns Bob's working on will be a step-by-step of a commission he's done, so that's something to look forward to.

Personally, I'm glad to hear that someone out there is still interested in inking and learning more about it. To that end, I've recruited several inker buds into something I call our Signature Artists: Tim Townsend, Mark McKenna, Sean Parsons, Walden Wong and our own Bob Almond. From that pool of talent, the onus isn't just one person and everyone brings his own style to the table.

Just as we have Signature Artists on the drawing category like Mitch Byrd and Gary Barker and in the writing category like Tom Blerbaum, Beau Smith and Chuck Dixon, we're working to assemble a massive pool in each part of the comics creation pro-

cess. I think you'll be pleased. Well, the readers in general, William, maybe not you specifically. We'll see. Keep letting us know your thoughts.

And since I'm one of his inker friends, I guess I'm one of those creators you mentioned, but that's okay. I'll take it.

Sketch Magazine #36 was awesome. I love Skottie Young. His artwork is great. I can't wait to see his Alice in Wonderland book from Marvel. The rest of the magazine was good also.

Bye,  
Karla McCreed

Thanks, Karla. I agree that Skottie's work is awesome!  
Bill

What happened with the numbers on Sketch #36? Below the logo it says #34 but next to the barcode it says #36.  
Ray Reed

I covered this in my notes, Ray. It was a Photoshop error on my part.  
Thanks  
Robert

The new logo is cool. You continue to create a magazine that speaks to the creators not down to them.



Please continue delivering informative articles.

Madison McKenzie

Thanks, Madison, that's the goal around here!

Bill

Hey,

I just saw the Adam Hughes cover for Sketch #39. I'm renewing my subscription today. I love Adam's artwork. Can't wait to read his interview.

Ricky Chase

I love to hear about subscriptions being renewed or taken out, Ricky. I think you made a wise investment and I'll do my best to make sure that you did!

Bill

I notice you didn't have an art contest in Sketch #36. I enjoy contributing to the contests so are you going to have them in future issues?

Jeff Kesel

Jeff,

The DVD art contests are sponsored and as long as we can get a sponsor we will have contests. In this issue we have an Incredible Hulk movie art contest. Looking forward to seeing your submission.

Robert

Can you do a Frank Cho interview. He has done a lot of work over the past couple years. I'd enjoy seeing his process of creating a comic page.

Dean Potts

Frank's another awesome artist, Dean, that continues to amaze me. His past interview in Sketch continues to get good comments and wishful thinking, so we'll add his name to the ever-growing list! Man, I wish Sketch was monthly...but Bob's heart probably couldn't take the stress of all that design work...hm, maybe he could...uh, Bob?

Bill

Are you going to offer digital versions of Sketch Magazine? I enjoy the print version but a digital version I could take with me on trips.

Just a thought.

Mike Peterson

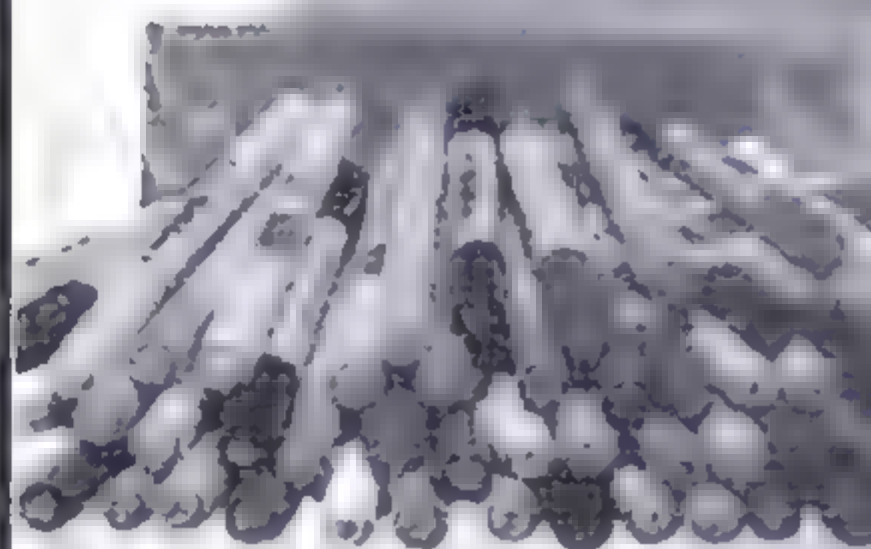
Mike

We are currently working on the digital version. As soon as we have something, we'll post it at SketchMagazine.net and here. Take care,

Robert

Send all your letters and questions to:  
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or email [sketchletters@bluelinepro.com](mailto:sketchletters@bluelinepro.com)

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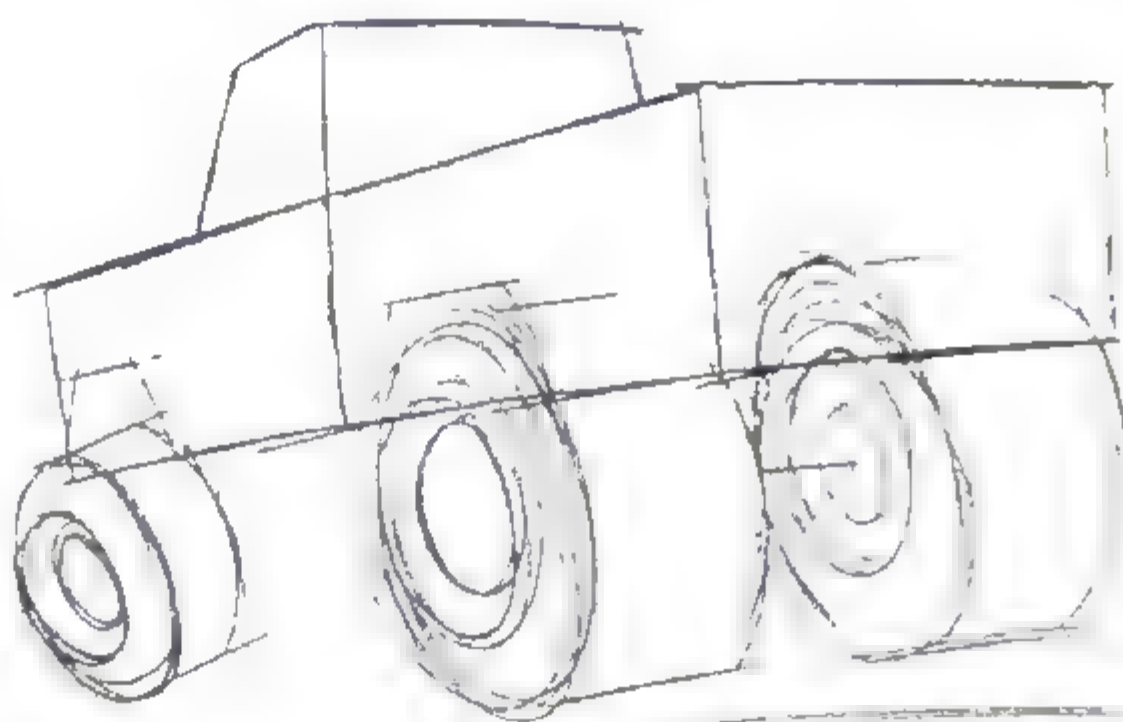


# Trosley's HOW TO! DRAW

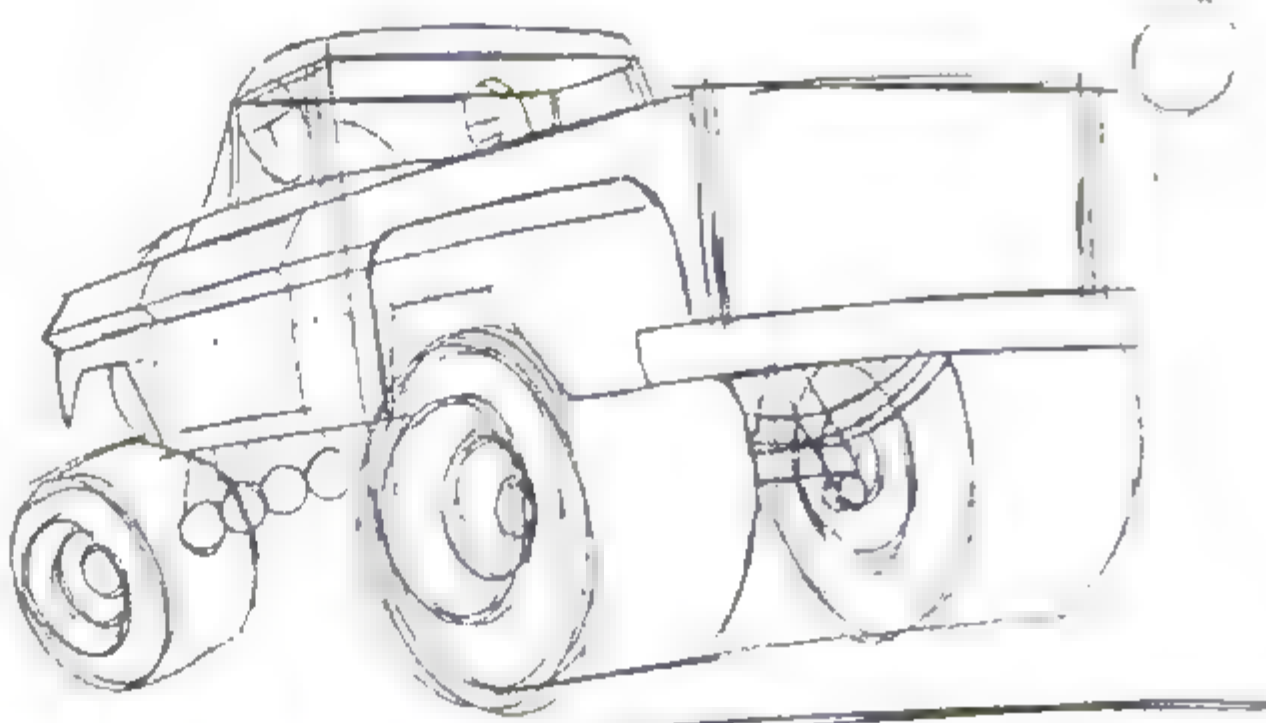
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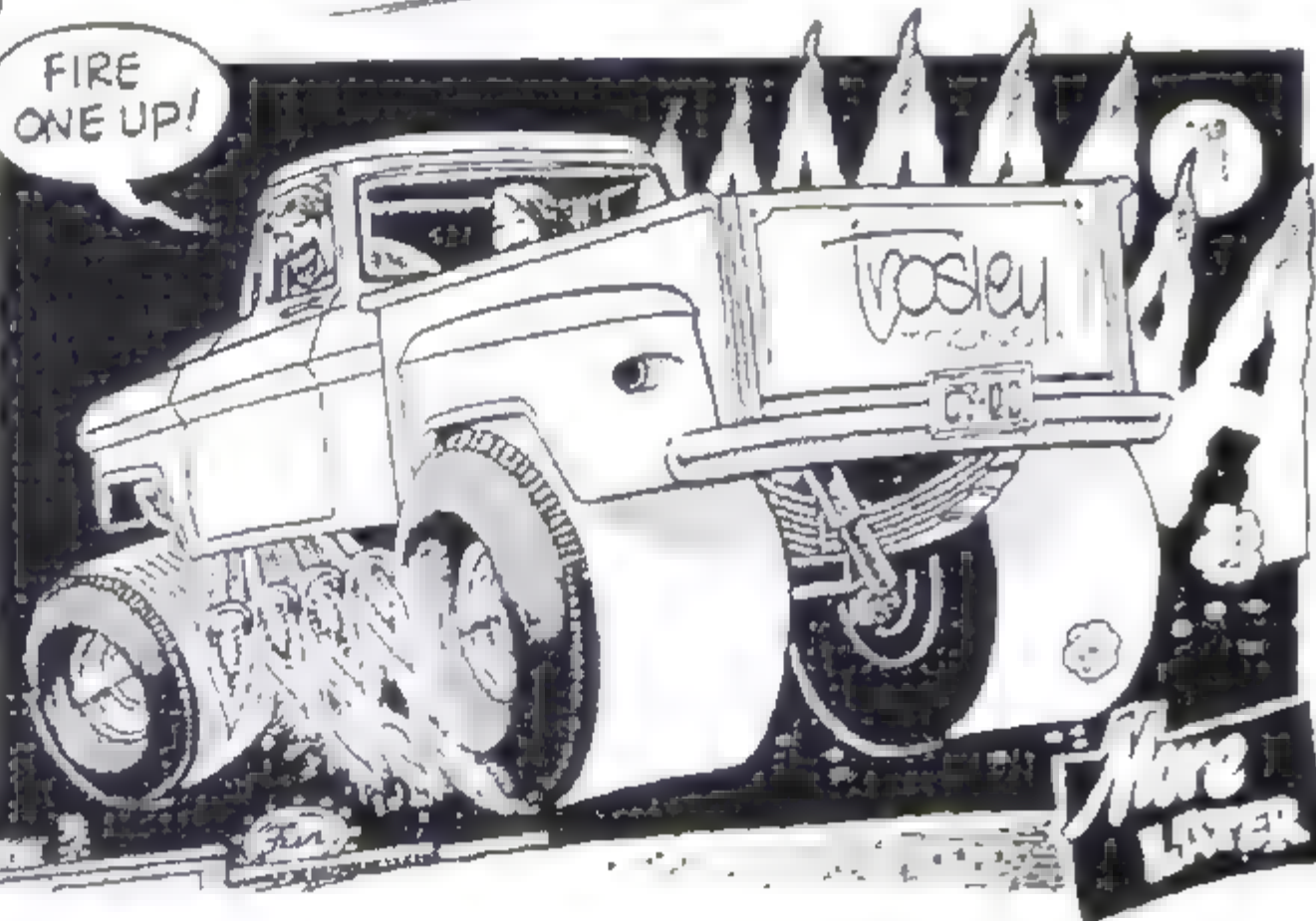


LOTS TO DO HERE... CARVE OUT THE CAB WITH THE ROOF LINE ADDING A COUPLE OF RODDERS TO KEEP THINGS TRUE. DRAW RIGHT THROUGH THINGS AT THIS STAGE. NOTICE FRONT FENDER CONTOUR RUNNING IT BACK TO THE REAR FENDER. DOOR LINES... REAR BUMPER AND SIDE PIPES HELP AS DOES REAR AXLE SUSPENSION.



CHECK'ER OVER ONE MORE TIME REAL GOOD BEFORE INKING ADDING DETAIL ALONG THE WAY. FLAMES... SOUND AND THE RIGHT LIGHTING GIVE THE DRAWING SOME EXCITEMENT. ADD YOUR NAME TO THE REAR GATE THEN INK YOURSELF INSIDE... OH YEA.. BE NEAT!

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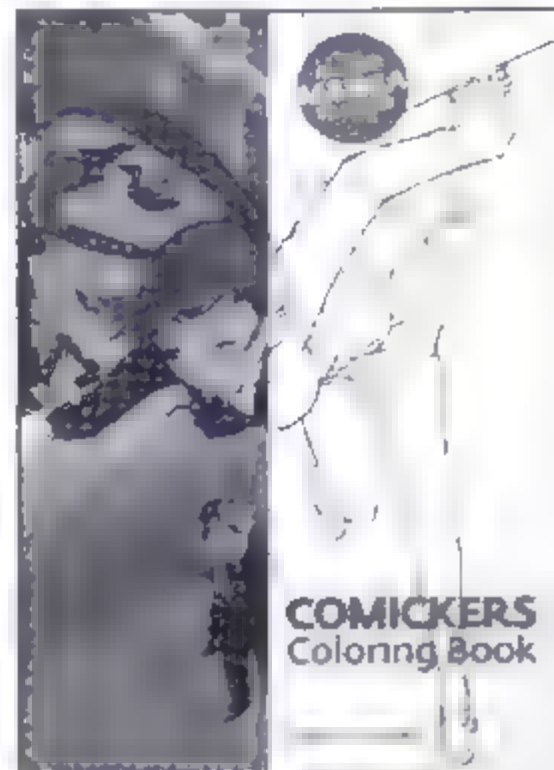
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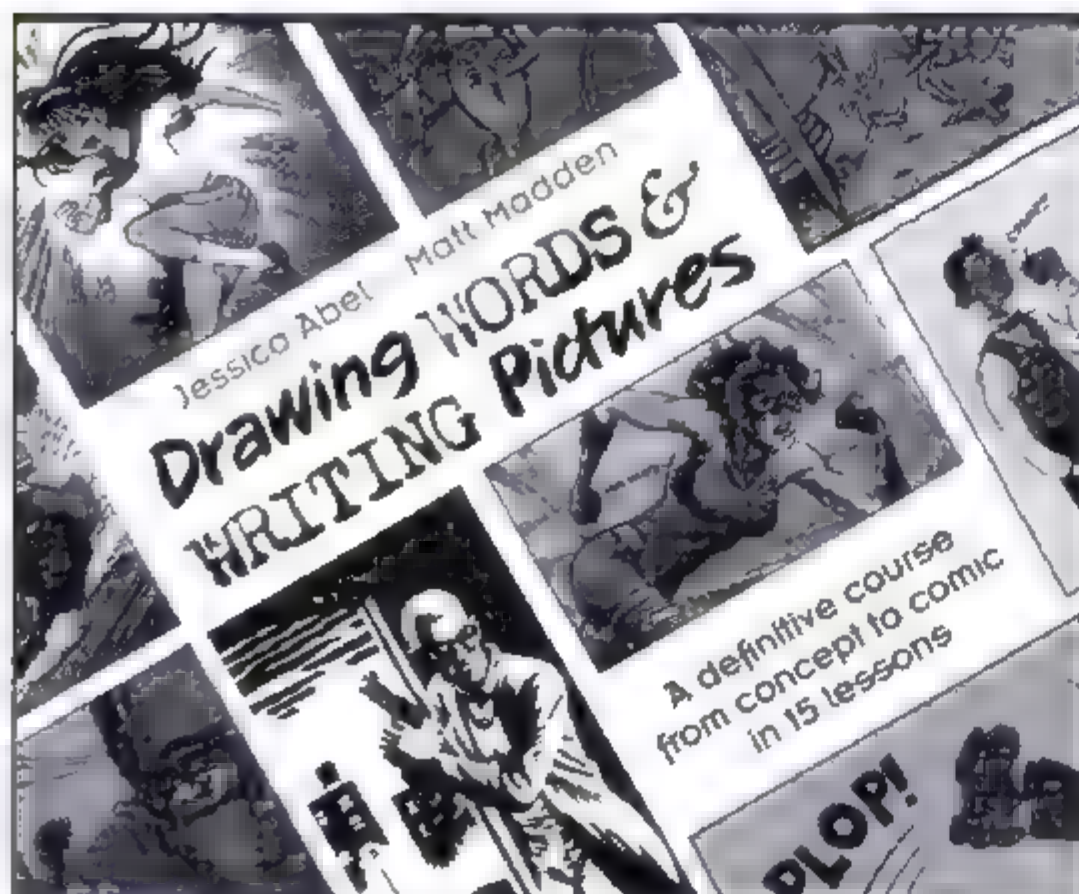


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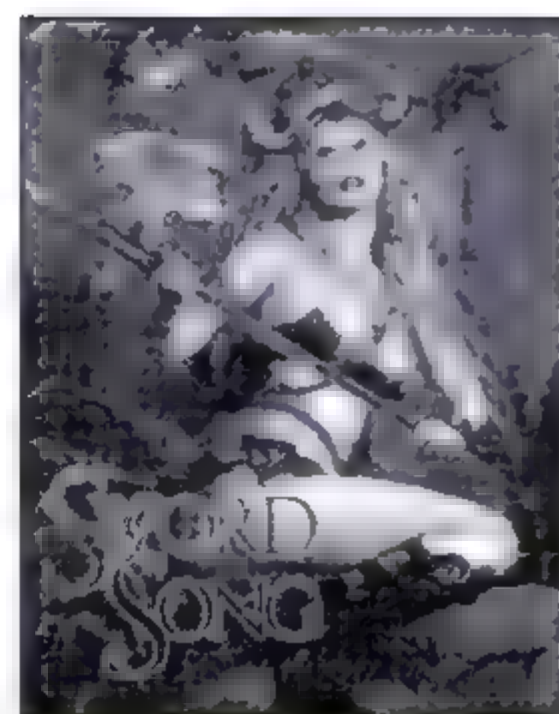




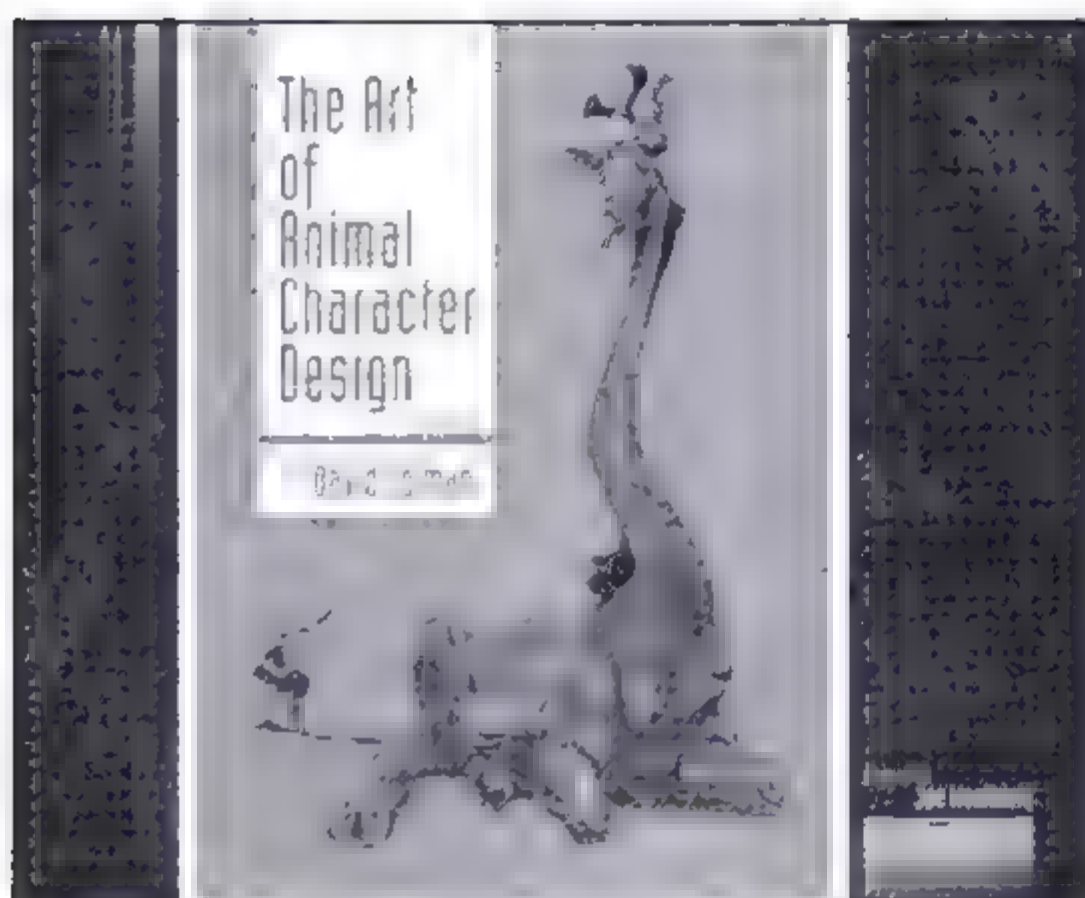
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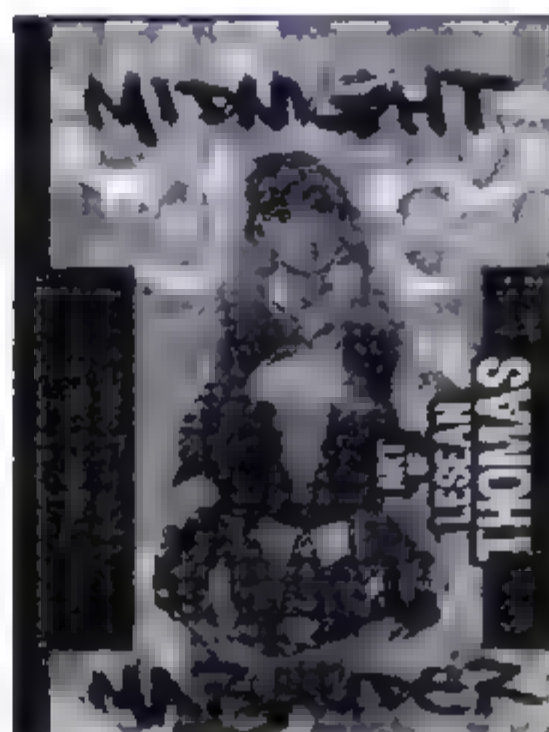
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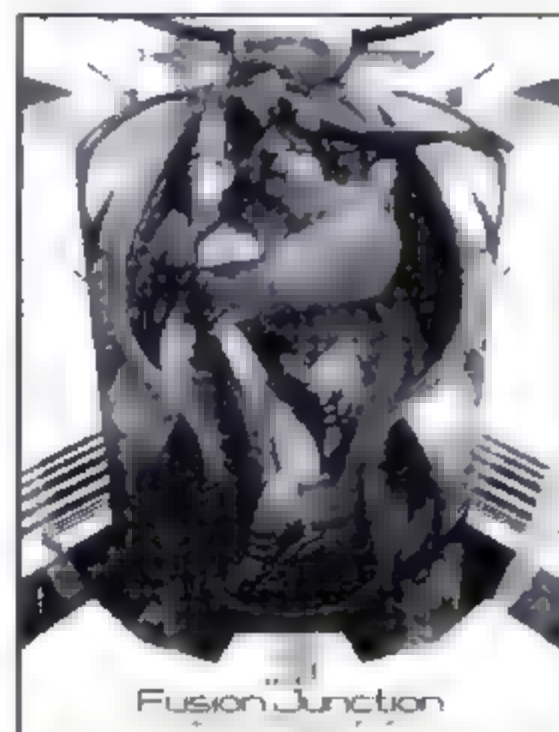
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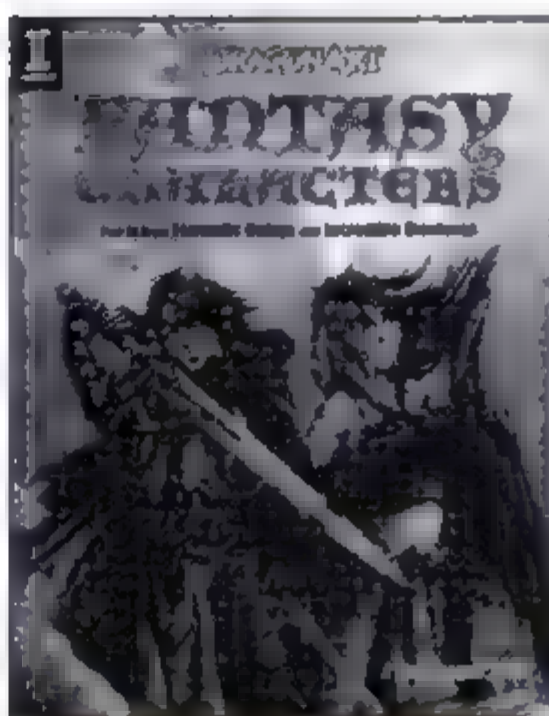
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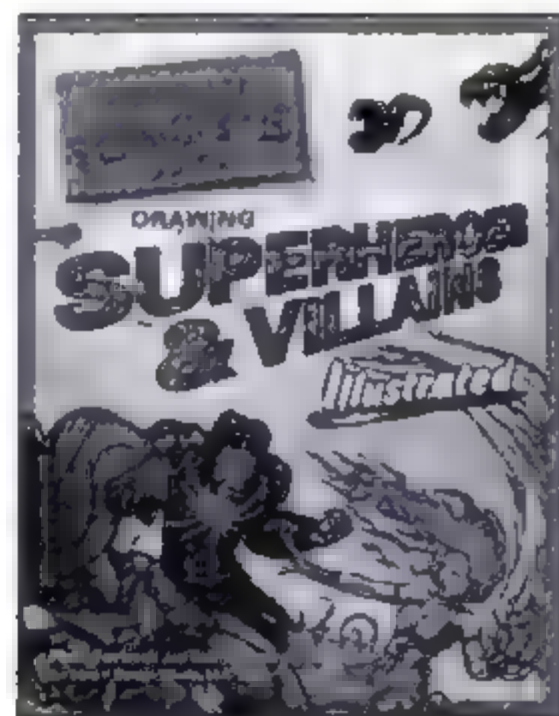
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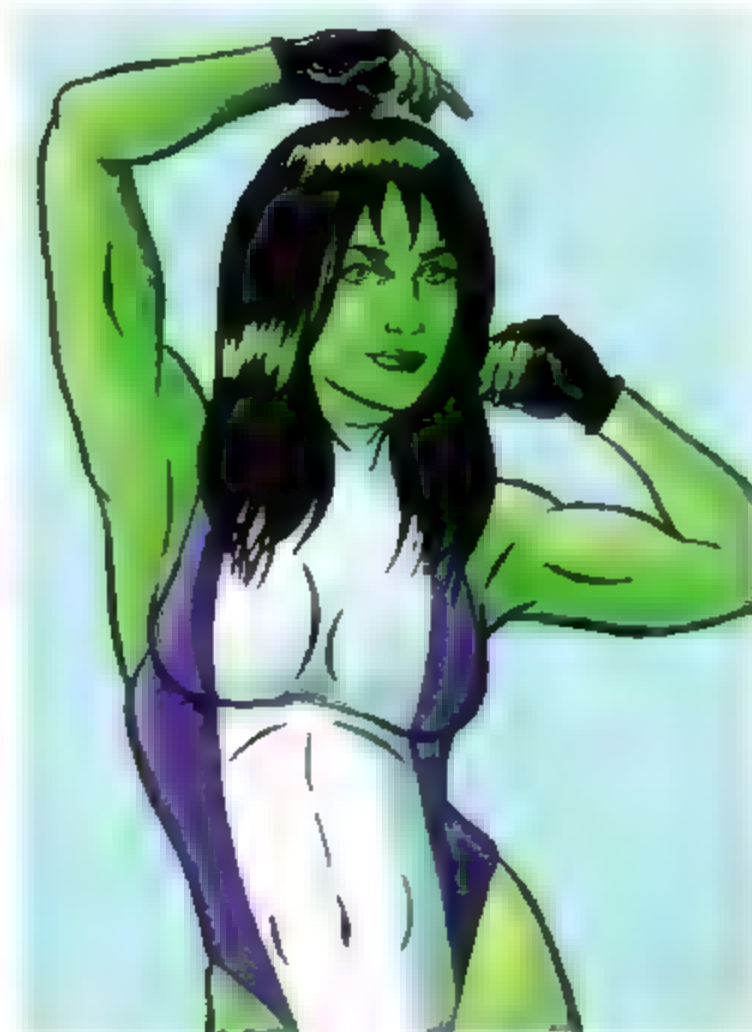


# Coloring

## COLORING LINEART IN PHOTOSHOP

### part 2

by Anthony D Lee



#### STEP 7: FINALISING THE IMAGE FOR PRINT

This step gets your file ready for print by adding the line art back to the image. Once again, it's long-winded, but an essential step in the process. If you miss it, you risk some nasty surprises come printing time.

Go into your "Channels" tab and select the "Black Copy" you made at the start. At the bottom of the tab, you'll see a button that says "Load Channel as Selection". Click that, and all your line art will be selected. Next, select "Select", then "Modify", then "Contract". Set the pixels to "1" and click OK. (I'll explain this in a moment.)

Click the color selector on the tool bar and next to the color selection box, you'll see boxes that allow you to directly enter the value of a color into each of the channels. Enter these values directly into the boxes: set C to 60, set M to 40, Y to 40 and K to 0.

Now select CMYK in the "Channels" tab. Then click "Edit", then "Fill". Set the mode to "Normal", and the amount to 100%. Click OK.

De-select the line art (CTRL and D) then select "Black copy" once more, and "Load Channel as Selection" again, but this time don't contract it.

Now, in the color selector again, select a pure black C to 0, Y to 0 and M to 0 and K to 100.

Select CMYK again, then Click "Edit", "Fill". This time set the mode to "Multiply", amount to 100% and click OK.

Once this step is done, your art is completely finished, and you can delete "Black Copy".

OK, those steps where you contract the selection. The reason you've done that is so that there's an "Undercolor" beneath the line art. The undercolor is there so that the black can sit on top of a solid color, so no

other colors will show through in the print process (also known as a four color black). And the reason you contract the undercolor is that should the black channel be slightly out of line during printing, the undercolor won't be noticeable and you don't get ugly bits of color poking out from under the line art.

And now your page is completely ready for print! But there are a couple of things that you can do after this stage to jazz up the image even further...

#### STEP 8: COLOR HOLDS

Color holds are a wonderful effect in comic books. This is where the line art itself gets colored, to make something stand out. It could be an energy beam, or an explosion, or even strands of hair. It's a great look when used sparingly.

On this piece, I've decided to color hold the borders of the backdrop. This gives it a really nice look, and also helps to throw She-Hulk forward, as she's now the only thing on the page with a black outline.

Select the wand tool, set the tolerance option to 4, and make sure to uncheck the "Contiguous" box I mentioned before, as this time, you want all the black line art selected.

In your "Channels" tab select "Black" and then click the wand on any piece of line art. With the contiguous box unchecked, all the black lines, no matter where they are, are selected.

Select "CMYK" once again, and select a hard-edged brush. Then simply pick any color and paint directly onto the selected line art. It really is that easy, though you'll have to be careful in areas where the art you want to color meets the art that you don't. But, with practice, it'll become much easier.

#### STEP 9: LETTERS

Now, normally the colorist won't deal with letters at all but, seeing as I'm also the artist and want to do a finished piece, I've added lettering in the bottom section.

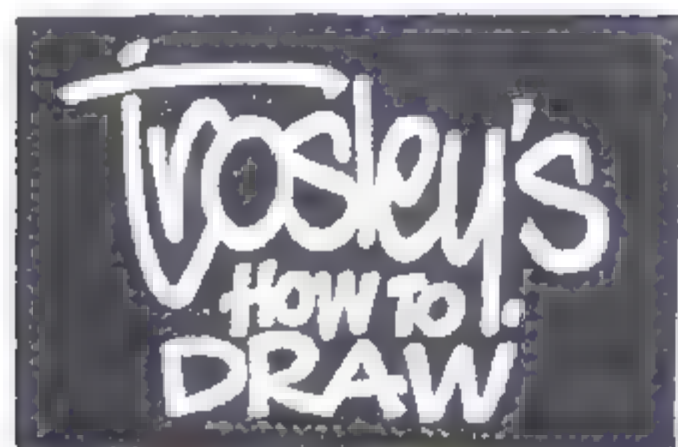
This step's really easy. Simply select the color you want the letters to be from your color selector, and then click on the "Horizontal Type Tool" (quick key "T"). Click anywhere on the image and type. Along the top are options for Typeface, and size among others. Once you have the lettering the way you want it, click on the check mark in the top options, and then place your text using the "Move" tool.

The letters will create a new layer, so simply click "Layers" and "Merge Visible" and the lettering becomes part of the image.

And that's it! There's the finished image. See how different it looks from the flats from earlier? I really hope that this was helpful, and I really hope that it didn't get too confusing on the way. Go over the steps several times, and each time they'll get easier. I promise. When I started out, I thought I'd never get any of these steps down, but now it all comes as second nature. Once you learn the steps and techniques, you'll barely think about what you're doing. The thing to remember about coloring, and indeed, art in general, is to enjoy what you're doing. If you're not into the piece you're working on, it can really show through.

Now, go! Go color some comics and give me some stiff competition...! Oh, wait. Bugger... I just gave away all my secrets.

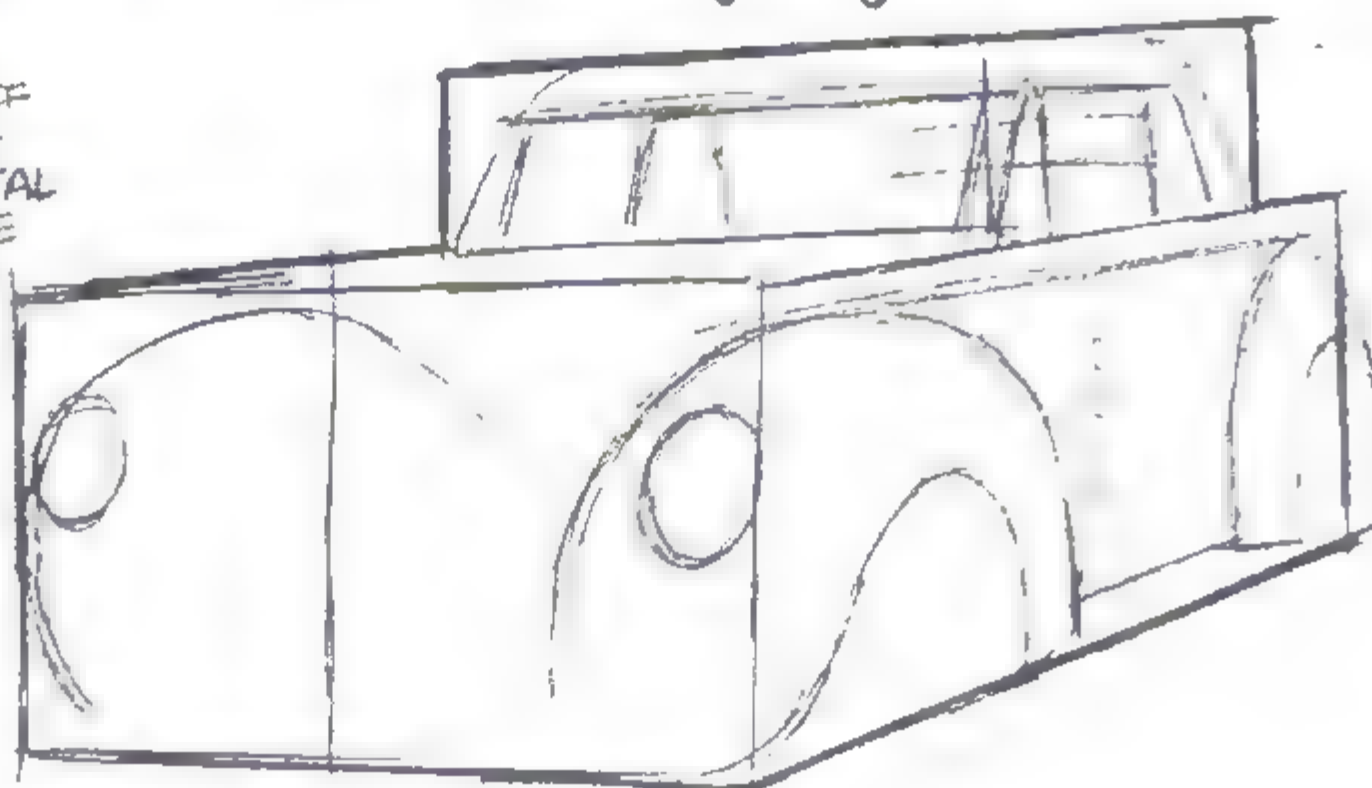




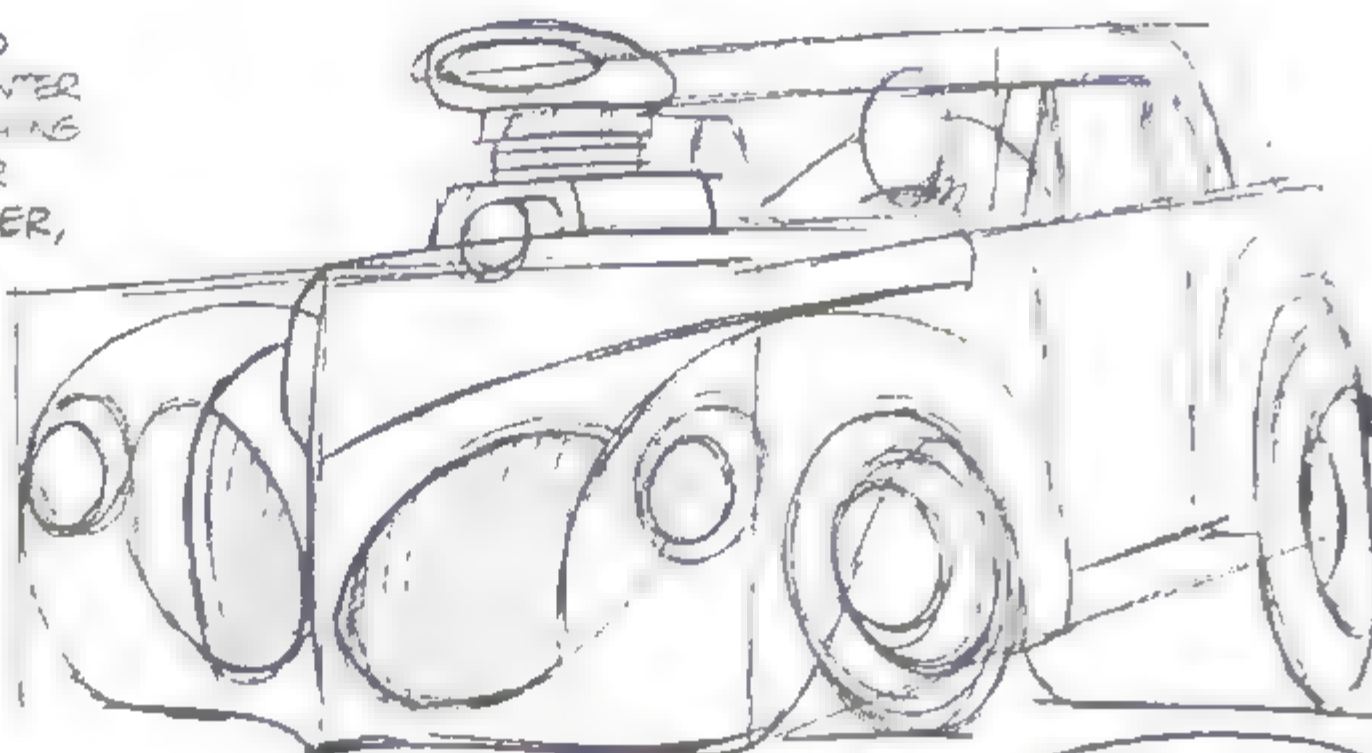
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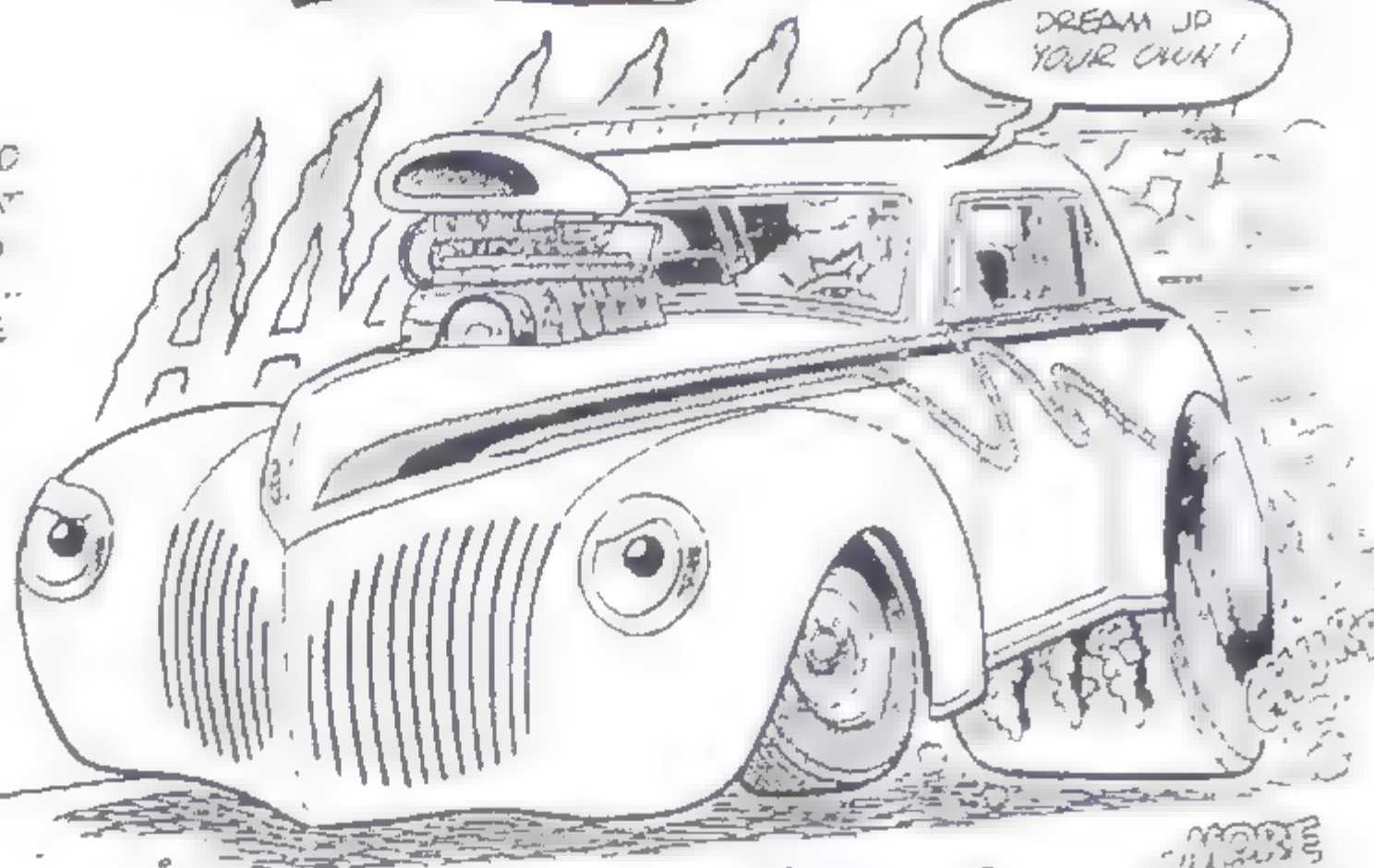
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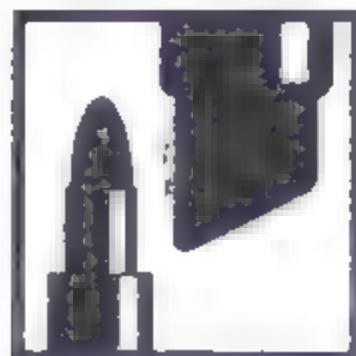
IT'S CRAY TIME TO ADD MORE DETAIL TO THAT ENGINE ALONG WITH SOME MOTOR NOISE... HAVE FUN WITH SOME BODY GRAPHICS AND TRY TO LET THEM FOLLOW THE BODY'S OWN STYLING. INK ALL THIS WITH YOUR FAVORITE PEN ADDING SOLID BLACKS AS SHOWN AND YOU'RE ALL SET TO GO PRO STREET!





# LETRASET

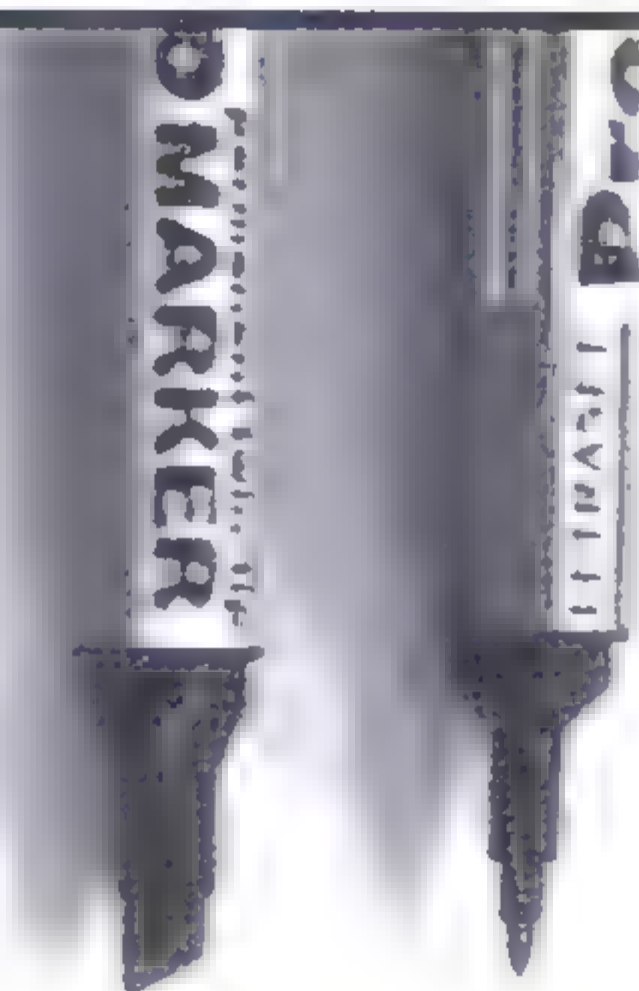
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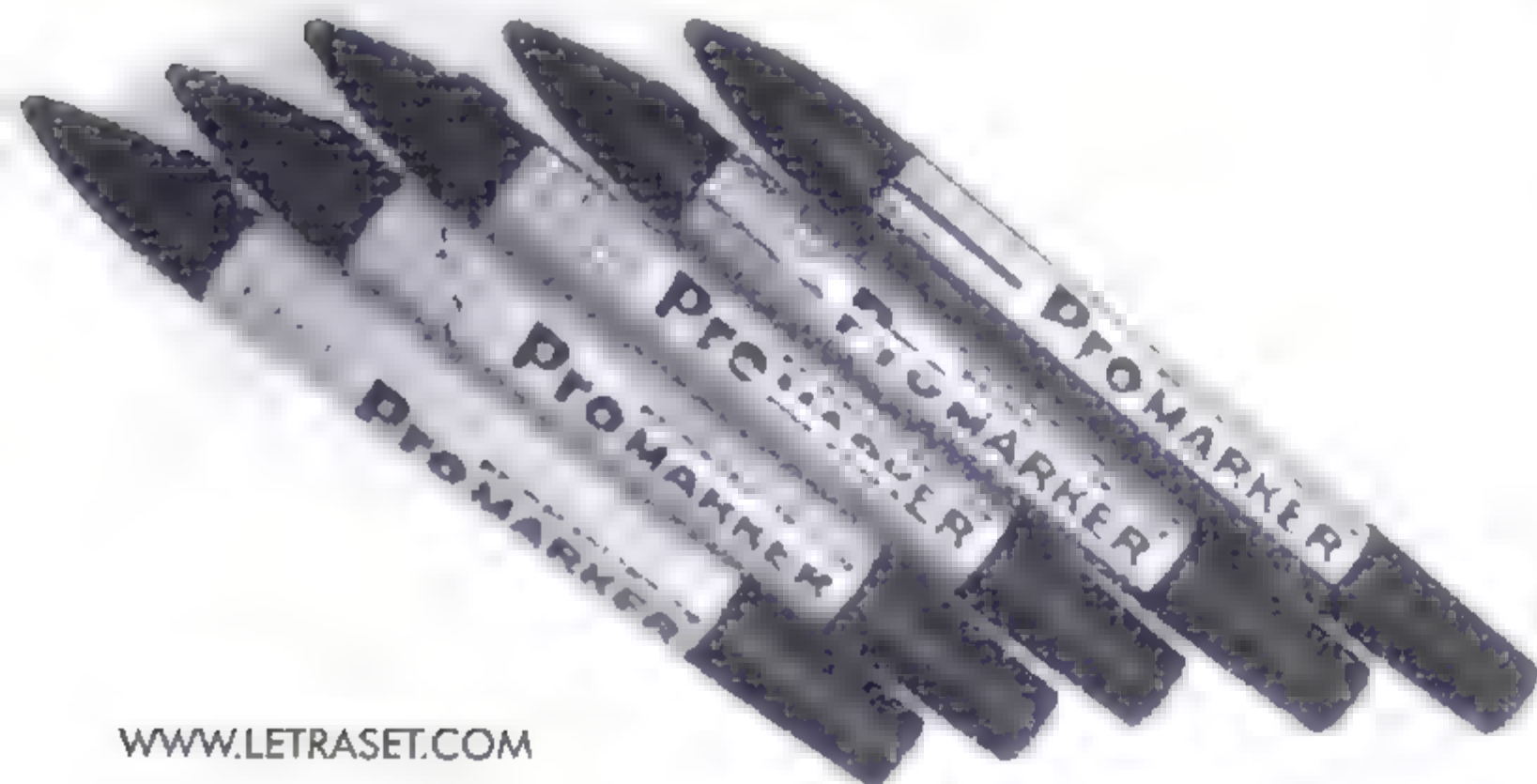
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# Coloring MY COLORING PROCESS

by Rebecca Thompson

First of all, I would like to say thank you to Bill Nichols and Bob Hickey for giving me the opportunity to share my work in this magazine. The following is a walkthrough of my current technique for coloring character pin-ups. The character I am using here is Amadeus Chase, a professional hoverboard racer from an original story of mine entitled *Rocketropolis*

FIGURE 1

These are my rough sketches for Amadeus. As he is initially quite a mysterious and distant figure, I wanted his racing costume to be simple, yet smart, not giving much away about his personality



Figure 1

FIGURE 2

- 1 After deciding his final look, I created the pencil sketch. It really helps to keep this as clean as possible.
- 2 The flat shading. This is colored on the layer underneath the pencil sketch, with the pencil sketch layer set to 'Multiply'.
- 3 Flattened the 2 layers together and increased the contrast, as well as playing with the color levels. I increased both the amount of blue and red tinting very slightly in order to get the shades I wanted.
- 4 So far, everything has been done in Photoshop. Here I have loaded the picture up in Painter, and have roughly blended in the pencil shading on his face using a variety of blender brushes, blocking in basic shadows and highlights. It is also possible to blend effectively in Photoshop using the paintbrush tool to build up layers of colors, however this is quite time consuming and I had a time limit!
- 5 Back to Photoshop, I neaten up the face shading and define the eye/nose areas, using the smudge tool with a hard round brush to push and 'sculpt' things into place. For details I use a very small and hard color paintbrush. Soft brushes are no good, it is impossible to get proper definition with them.



Figure 2





Figure 3

FIGURE 3

6. Still tweaking the face, using a very soft burn brush to darken up some areas.

7. I have used the smudge tool again to push some texture into the hair. I start by placing darker shades very roughly onto the hair, and use the smudge tool to again 'sculpt' the shapes and strands in. I then create highlights in the same way.

8. Using another layer on top, I have created some shadows using a simple cel-shading technique. The shadows are drawn on with the lasso tool and filled with the paintbucket tool at about 33% opacity.

9. I took the drawing over to Painter again, blending the shadows to get rid of the harsh edges. I also altered the color levels to make them bluer, which was purely for mood purposes. As this character is initially quite mysterious in the story, I felt that the colors were looking slightly too warm, and he needed to look colder.

10. I have added some checkered texture to his suit and boots. The checkers are placed on a separate layer and set to 'Soft Light' at a low opacity.

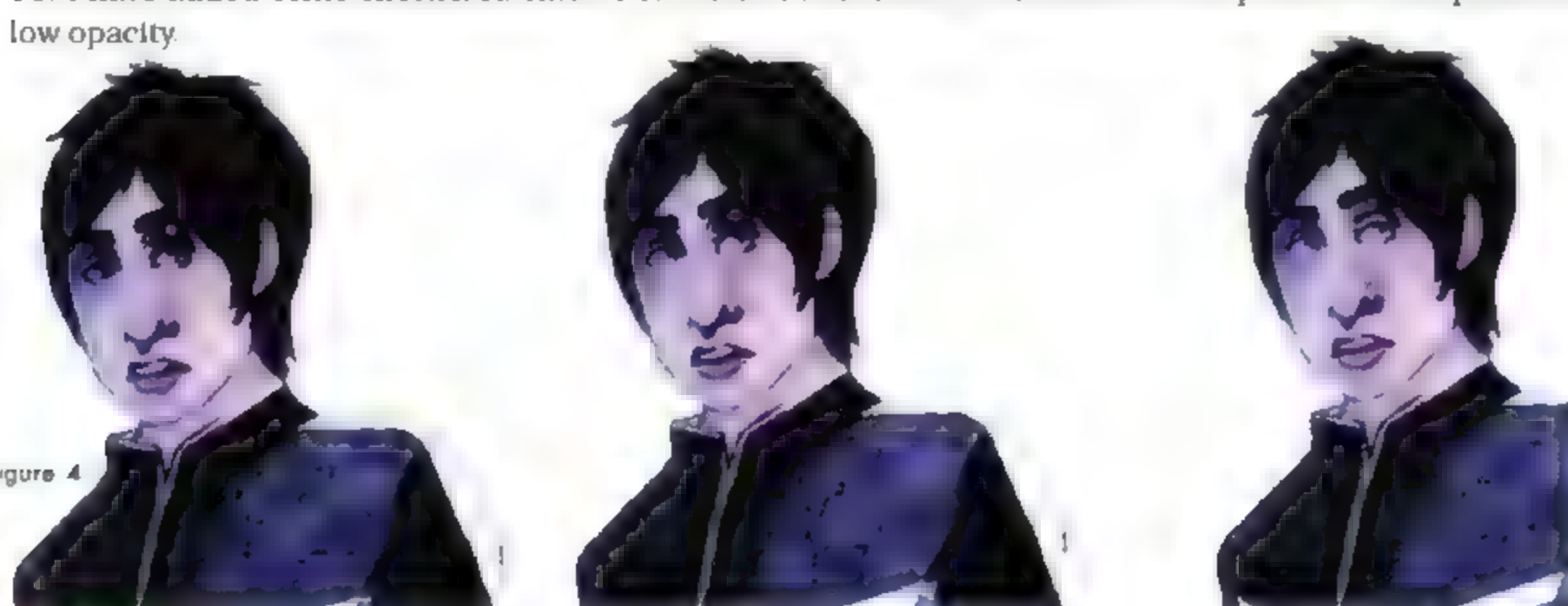


Figure 4

FIGURE 4

I went back to the face and altered the positioning of his eyes and nose. It was then I realized he had dead bug eyes! So I brightened his eyes up considerably using a white paintbrush set to a very low opacity until he didn't scare me any more. I then added some pink to his mouth and lightened up his eyelids because he was looking a little too much like he was wearing far too much gothic makeup, when in fact he should be wearing no makeup at all.

FIGURE 5

And here he is 99% complete. He still needs some very minor tweaking here and there, especially round the edges, but he's more or less done. The last step I do is add a secondary light source - which is the blue lighting down his right side. This lighting really helps a character appear more 3D. I also added those glowing strips to his suit to give it a more futuristic feel.

That's it! I hope that was helpful, or at least interesting to look at. Remember that the real key to improving in any aspect of art is to practice every day, not worry about making mistakes, and to have fun. For feedback or questions, feel free to email me at [rebecca\\_thompson@btinternet.com](mailto:rebecca_thompson@btinternet.com). Happy sketching!



Figure 5



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